

Kyo – The Shaman who knew too much!

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Shamans

Before the Greenlanders were converted into Christianity they imagined their surroundings as being alive. The West Greenlanders became christianised during the 1700 years, the East Greenlanders in late 1800 years, and the North Greenlanders (Inughuit or Polar-Eskimos) between 1912 and 1934. Not everything was instant visible, but that did not make them less real. Everything was alive, not only human beings, animals, and plants, but also features as the sea, the mountains, and all other items in nature. Everything had a spirit (“soul”), which the Eskimos called “inua”. This the Eskimo believed to look like an invisible human being, but smaller. Thus the inua was ascribed human qualities. This way a spirit could be happy, or angry. By crossing the unwritten rules for correct behavior one could offend the spirits, who would revenge itself on the person in question. For moderate protection one would carry amulets, but in more serious cases one would have to ask the shaman for help. An amulet is a device which attracts good powers and repel bad and evil forces.

A shaman – angakok in Eskimo – is a human being, woman or man, using a special technique and trapping, assisted by controlled helping spirits. Through soul journey in the state of ecstasy the shaman gets into direct contact with the supernatural forces, which might speak through the shaman, at his will, to his people. The shaman is the connection between this world and other worlds. In principle anyone can become a shaman, but it is a dangerously, and risky way of life with many taboos to keep, so only the few who actually felt a vocation, would dare to start on an education to become a shaman.

In Greenland the shaman did not have a special outfit or trapping as known for instance from Siberia, but they looked and was dressed like anyone else. Some European researcher have the opinion that only mentally ill persons would become shamans. That is a very wrong idea. On the contrary shaman are recutet

among intelligent people, because the person must have mental surplus in order to help the members of his people, who has problems.

For the common person, shamans may sound and act strange, but this is only due to the limitation of univers known to the common person. Human beings who travel and crosses bonderies throughout the many worlds of the univers, will of course be looked upon as odd and different of people, who only know a smaller part of the world.

Usually the shaman was a protector of the society, where he lived, and the person who would make sure that traditions recieved from the ancestores were given to the upgrowing generations. Now and then the power and influence the shaman gained would go to his head. Such evil shamans would use their powers for own profit. If such a self orientated shaman became an abomination and the society felt threaten, society had to protect it self. The most common solution was to send the evel shaman on a oneway ticket to a far away world. This is the story of such a shaman.

A public problem was cleared

In the 1860's and 1870's among the Inughuit (the Polar-Eskimos) lived a married couple, Avatannguaq and his wife Tulugalik, who both had suprenatural abilities. Both was feared as powerful shamans, who might cause death and evil. When the fear towards these two powerful persons grew to large, the Polar-Eskimo society persuaded two of the foreigner (immigrants from Canada) Qillarsuaq and Panigpak together with one of their own, Iggiannuaq, who was married to one of the foreigners, to kill Avatannguaq.

The Polar-Eskimo author Ulloriaq (1985:64-68) gives a very dramatic and detailed account of the killing. There was a big fight. Because Qillarsuaq also was a great shaman, he was chosen to finish off Avatannguaq, which he did. Qillarsuaq cut the dead body into many pieces. The three men did not want to place the body in a grave until next day, because there might still be some power left in him, but the next day the body had vanished and was nowhere to be found.

After the death of Avatannguaq the widow Tulugalik and her daughter, Kulapak, moved to Kiatak (Northumberland Island). Kulapak died as a very old person around 1921-1922. She was mother to the great shaman Qaanngaaq

Peary has an interesting note about this murder, mostly however, I think he got the information wrong. It was very uncommon for the Inughuit to make tattooes on their bodies. Thus Peary found it interesting that Kyo was one of the



From left: Kavsaluk with her two children, the boy Inuteq in front, and the daughter Naduk in the hood, beside her husband Ulloriaq. Next to them another couple: Itokusuk and his wife Akutak. Photo by Thomas Thomsen, July 1909, at Uummannaq in the Thule District, North Greenland. Courtesy of the National Museum of Denmark.

few natives among the Inughuit who had seen tattooed people of the west. Peary never learned the Inughuit language very well, so he might have misunderstood something. On the other side Kyo might have braged about his doings to impress Peary.

“As a boy, accompanying his father upon a polar bear hunt which led them to the western shores of Smith Sound, he saw his father killed in a struggle with a party of the tattooed men. Years after, as a young man, he had the pleasure of killing his father’s murderer, and then, by some chance which I [Peary] never could quite clear, the wife of this murdered man, with her young son, became a resident of the Whale Sound region [Inughuit Land]. That son, now grown to be a stalwart young man, is the only one in the tribe whom the great angakok fears, and it is quite possible that he may have already paid the debt of the blood feud at his hands.” (Peary 1904:77-78).

It is correct that Qillarsuaq was from the west (Arctic Bay, Baffin Island), and it is not known if he was tattooed, but it was common that Eskimos in Canada had tattoos. Qillarsuaq came to land of the Inughuit in the 1860s. He stayed about a decade and died many years later on the way back of illness and old age. Panipak died in 1929, but nothing is known about Iggiannguarsuaq. (Ulloriaq 1985)

Avatannuaq and Tulugalik had beside the daughter Kulapak also two sons: Kajorapaluk and Eqovaq. Kajorapaluk also became a shaman. It was not from foreigners he got his ability. He seems to use his powers as negative as his father did, and ended up with a similar fate. Maybe the society got the idea to solve the problem with Kajorapaluk, remembering what had happened to his father.

In the Fall of 1901 the detested shaman Kajorapaluk was murdered. He had a bad habit of telling the death of others. Nobody wanted to hear that. People were tired of him because he "stole the souls". It was not common to kill other persons in the Inughuit society. But the public opinion had for a long time decided that Kajorapaluk was an abomination to the society.

The Danish Literary Greenland Expedition (1902-1904) with Ludwig Mylius-Erichsen as leader and the painter Harald Moltke and Knud Rasmussen as members, spent 8 months in 1903 among the Inughuit. Knud Rasmussen, only 24 years old, later turned into a famous polar explorer. This expedition gave the Inughuit the name: the Polar-Eskimo.

Mylius-Erichsen wrote afterwards in a rapport (now in the Danish National Archive): "Just before our arrival to the Cape York area, where the Polar-Eskimos live, had a shaman forced so much power over his tribe members, that he was killed by a conspiracy against him. The tribe members could no longer control his doings as he always blamed the spirits for the problems.

As a shaman he was constantly fighting these spirits on behalf of and for the good of his fellow citizens. But for this work he demanded as a kind of payment favours from the people. These favours had become of such a load that he was no longer tolerated. Among other things he tried to steal wives for own use. He often succeeded in doing so as he would otherwise call on the spirits to use their evil power on the husband, and have the spirits to rob the souls of the people in question."

At that time Christianity had not yet arrived among the Inughuit, but other things from the White Man had. Diseases had cut heavily on the society, so there were only 40% women. Thus it was difficult to get a wife for the men.

Ulloriaq (Uvdloriaq) who about ten years later was among the first to be baptised, told then, that he and Masaitsiaq had shot the hated shaman Kajorapaluk. First Masaitsiaq shot him, but only wounded him, then Ulloriaq was forced to shoot to kill, and had shot him in the head.

Eqovaq, Kajorapaluk's brother lived further to the North. Ulloriaq asked Mylius-Erichsen to take the life from Eqovaq, when the expedition arrived up there. Ulloriaq told the White Men that Eqovaq wants to shoot him. Ulloriaq could not anticipate Eqovaq, as Ulloriaq dared no longer kill any, because he is an orphan and without any close relatives to support him. (Mylius-Erichsen 1906:221).

Kajorapaluk had a bad personality and was a bad sport, who always insulted others around him. But the real reason which caused his death was that he always was lying and cheated others in relating to hunting. He could for fun create fear among people on the settlement by giving a false warning against poor hunting, and cause the people to starve. Now and then he would tell that he had seen belugas or walrosses certain places, but it always turned out to be false alarm. Slowly all his bad doings became too much for the Inughuit, and the public opinion decided on it would be best if his was no longer present. (Steenby 1910:336).

Knud Rasmussen (1915:28) tells that even it was considered good for the society that Masaitsiaq had been in on the killing of Kajorapaluk, Masaitsiaq decided at least for some years to keep a low profile in the outskirts of the Inughuit land. He took as his wife Qiajuk, Kajorapaluk's widow. They got a daughter, Sinarujuk in 1904.

In 1905 Masaitsiaq and his little family joined together with Uisakavsak at the settlement on Cape Seddon in the Melville Bay in order to get further away from the mainstream in the Polar-Eskimo society. That was exactly the same reason why Uisakavsak had settled at Tuttulissuaq, the settlement at Cape Seddon, which was known for its splendid hunting grounds.

Uisakavsak had visited New York City (1897-1898), but nobody among the Polar-Eskimos believed him, when he told about what he experienced and he was named "The Great Liar" (Gilberg 1970, 1994).

Kyo

August 1891 an American expedition arrived in the land of the Inughuit. The Americans wanted to learn about survival and the way of life in order at a later time to be able to travel to the North Pole. The expedition built a house for the

winter at the foothills of Redcliffe Mountain. The leader of the expedition was the navy lieutenant Robert Edwin Peary.

The first Inughuit-family to be friends with the Americans was Eqovaq [Ikwa] and his wife Manik [Mani]. They settled at the headquarter and became the link to the rest of the Polar-Eskimo people. A couple of month later Eqovaq showed up with his brother, Kajorapaluk [Kyoahpadu], who also settled there. Several of the American expedition members has written about him, who they called Kyo as Kajorapaluk was too difficult to pronounce or to remember. The qoutations tells as much about the Americans as about Kajorapaluk.

"Tuesday, November 17, 1891" Mrs. Peary wrote (1893:80). "This morning Eqovaq [Ikwa] introduced a rather clean-looking native from Ummannak [Omanooy],. His name is Kajorapaluk [Kioppadu]."

"Kyoahpádu, Ikwa's brother, we called "Kyo" for short, and I", Peary wrote (1898(1):164), "nicknamed him "Father Tom", who made himself very useful about the house, sweeping the floor and putting things in order. He often remarked that he wished to go home with us when we returned, but he changed his mind before summer.

"Father Tom", on the whole the most remarkable native we met, deserves more a passing word. He at once became a fixture at Red Cliff House. Active and willing, eager to be of service, readily understanding us when other natives failed to comprehend, he soon worked his way into our good grace. He took upon himself the care of the large room, sprang for the broom whenever he saw the least dust or litter, and told the other natives they must not bring dirt into the palace of the "Great White Man". He said his brother's igloo was uncomfortable for him because it was so small. Moreover his brother talked too much, and his verbosity was a weariness to the flesh. So Kyo asked if he might sleep on our floor, and I accordingly gave him a couple of blankets and let him curl himself up at night in a corner of the big room. In the morning he would carefully fold his blankets and deposit them in an empty box outside."

Peary (1904:69-71) was surprised to discover that Kyo was the first native, who did not like to be photographed. He hesitated to appear in the expedition house, so Dr. Cook had to go outside and persuade him.

"Once in the house, he seemed to regard the preparations for taking his picture - that is, placing the screen and the chair and bringing out the cameras - much as a condemned man would view the building of the scaffold; and when he was finally seated in the chair before the strange instruments, and was told to fix

his eyes on me as I removed the caps from the cameras, his teeth chattered in spite of his best efforts to assume an air of braggadocio. The word “tima,” which told him that the operation was over, seemed to relieve him of a great weight of fear. Yet the great angakok (shaman), as we afterward knew him to be, never lost the idea that those strange machines which had glared at him for an instant in the dazzling blaze of the flashlight had placed him, soul and body, forever in my power.”

“Wednesday, December 2, 1891: Kyo come in occasionally and scrape some of the skins after they have been chewed. Kyo especially tries to make himself useful. He presents rather a comical appearance in his bearskin nanookies and blue guernsey given him by one of the boys. Every time he sees any shavings or other trash on the floor he seizes the broom, made by him out of wings of eider-ducks, and sweeps it up.” (J. Peary 1893:86). Another member of the expedition was Dr. Frederick Alfred Cook, who wrote a small note on Kajorapaluk. This is not published but is found in the family archive:

“Kajorapaluk [Ky-ap-od-du] was gifted with a very keen brain, with a boy’s desire to get to the bottom of things. He retained this searching inclination to the end of his days. In his family there was some Indian blood, but he was in type and habits of life an Eskimo of the highest order of intelligence. As a boy Kyo had sought to be the most noted representation of his tribe, but what could he do to rate himself into prominence. The tribe had no need of a chief, nor any use for money, wealth, and leadership, therefore were barred as attainments. Every youth must become an expert hunter and prove his ability by getting a bear with a spear, before he can get a wife. Kyo got his bear and got his wife, but then his trouble began in quite the usual way. Good wives do not fit into an over-ambitious career, for Kyo was aimy to be the master of his kind.

Our first acquaintance with Kyo began in 1891 when he was about 35 years old. He was 5 feet 3 inches (158 cm), about two inches (5 cm) higher than the average, an evenly developed well shaped body, with almost super-human strength in game test of muscular power. Short fingers, skort toes, short nose and a compact body, such is the Eskimo advantage in conserving heat and energy - in a very cold climate; brown piercing eyes, long black hair and a golden skin. In his general physical make up he was a typical represent of his race at its best, but his head was longer, his face more expressive and his usable intelligence was greatly in advance of his kind.

Kyo wanted to become a shaman, te become the highest of the high angakok (shaman) of the religious dominans now became his dominating desire. To learn

he must spend much time with older shamans. This called for travel, study, and experiments. Thus he became a non-producer and was much away from home. His wife left him to find another man that could provide for her.

After several years of lonely wandering, suffering famine, and studied the way of life in order to gain a deeper insight. One day he exposed himself to the society as a shaman with support from Turnahuchsua of the land and Kokoya of the sea, with a sliding contract that included all other spirits of heaven and earth. And to his credit it must be said that he firmly believed in his calling and also had the faculty of making others believe in his sincerity." (F. A. Cook private notes).

Kyo fell in love

Kyo slept contentedly upon the floor at Peary's headquarter Redcliffe House, until one day from the north a widow Qiajuk [Klayu] with her three daughters (Inatdliaq, Qiajúnguaq, Tukúmínguaq), the husband and father, Nasaitorlluarsuk having but recently been dragged under the sea ice by a walrus and drowned. They staid only a few days, but that was long enough for Kyo to become enamoured of the widow. One star-lit December noon (Dec. 21, 1891) Kyo followed the widow traveling further south. She was about 7 years younger than Kyo who was born around 1856.

Kyo borrowed two dogs from Peary and indicated that he might be back after ten "sinnipahs" (sleeps). Sleep was a measure for time thus a 'day' was the amount of time between two 'sleeps'. During the 4 months of non sun shine in the dark season, it was impossible to talk about 'day'. The time difference between two 'sleeps' would be different from person to person and dependent of landscape and weather.

Not until March Kyo returned together with Qiajuk and the children. She was now his wife and the family settled near Redcliffe House, and staid there until the expedition left in august 1892.

While Kyo was gone the Americans heard some remarkable stories about him from the natives who visited. Few spoke well about him. By most he was hated and feared. "It was said that he had murdered a man and that he had twice been a widower, having killed his wives; also that he was an angakok (shaman) of great power." (Peary 1898(1)166).

He was not the same man after his return, and at times Peary felt slightly suspicious of him, especially in regard to tampering with Peary's dogs, and Peary even made up his mind that if, in disregard to Peary's command Kyo should at-

tempt to harness up one of Peary's finest teams of dogs for a journey south, Peary would shoot him. Luckily for Kyo it never came to this.

However, Peary soon found that "Kyo was subject to fits of insane anger, and on one or two occasions had stabbed his wife while in these fits. In one of his fits he threatened to kill his wife Qiajuk and her grown daughter Tukuminguaq [Tooky], so when Kyo was out kayaking the wife and daughter ran away. It took Kyo two weeks to find them and were reunited with them. (Peary 1904:76-77).

Kyo wanted to go along to America

At Redcliffe House, May 26, 1892: Kyo was dressed in a pair of woven trousers, a blue flannel shirt, and a pair of suspenders given him by Matthew Henson, and Robert Peary's old grey felt hat, which Mrs Peary gave him a couple days earlier, and which he hesitated to take, because, he said, it was not hers to give, and Peary would accuse him of stealing it. Mrs. Peary wrote (1893:154):

"He looked precisely like an Indian as he stood there, busy putting up his tent. He is filled with the idea of going to America. Every night he comes for a magazine to look at after he has gone to bed, as he has seen some of the expedition members do. When he gets to America he will learn how to read, and then he won't have to select books with pictures. Whatever he sees he wants to know if he will see it on America. He tells that he is an Angekok (shaman), and that he always cures the people. They never die where he is, and he can make them do just as he chooses. His wife does not seem to care to go to America, so for the last few days he has borrowed two or three magazines to take into his house, where for three or four hours at a stretch he has sat with his wife in front of him and the book between them, swaying himself from side to side, and singing a monotonous sort of tune at the top of his voice. In this way, the other natives assured, he worked a spell over the wife, and she willingly consented to go with him."

In July some of the expedition members began to carry guns, because hearing bits and pieces of Eskimo talk made them believe that Kyo would hame them. Kyo was frightened that the Americans were carrying revolvers, especially after he discovered a window had been opened. Kyo took a long talk with Dr. Cook, and said, that he "might shoot others, but the bullet would not hurt him; that the "kokoya" (evil spirit) was kind to him, and he would never die. But if the White Man killed the Inughuits the Kokoyah would, at Kyo's command, destroy their vessel, and they would all die." (J. Peary 1893:169). At last peace was made, however.

The shaman's predictions do not come true. During the period where Peary and Astrup crossed the inland icecap of North Greenland Kyo indulged in frequent seances, during which he came in spirit upon the inland icecap. When recovering from his trance he would tell Mrs. Peary how far away to the North the expedition was. Later he would tell that he had seen only one person staggering weakly homeward, and that the man was not her husband. Well, both Peary and Astrup returned tired but in good constitution.

Kyo calls on his spirits

Astrup attended some of Kyo's performances. Astrup tells (1895:28) that Kajoralpaluk [Kayapaddu] was a respected shaman with a smile, a heavy body, and had a hearty face. He only needed to add sunglasses to look like a good old-fashioned priest. Maybe that is the reason Peary nicknamed him "Father Tom".

When Kyo had his spiritual ceremonies the light from the blubber lamps was subdued so much that participants barely could see each other. Kyo took the gutskin covered drum in one hand and the drumstick of bone in the other and began to drum and sing. In the beginning he sang in a soft voice, but later it grew more and more agitated. He thrusted his body in huge curves from right to left, letting his long hair flow wild in the air, while his face expressed as he was in pain all over.

After a couple of hours like that his sweat pouring down his body. He pressed his hands toward his forehead. He cried, he pitied himself, and would suddenly start a demonic noisy laughter. And after all that he at last managed to get one or several invisible helping spirits to be present. Then his voice would change often as he at one point would be himself and at other would let the spirit talk through him. He became more and more noisy and managed at last to bring the audience in such an excited and nervous mood that all were trembling and shaking at the same time some of the older ones began to pitifully match Kyo.

Was the purpose to exorcise illness or to save a dying, Kyo could go on for hours like that as he would give up unless the sick died or grew better. In the first case he told that saving the sick was impossible even before start as some hostile spirits had stolen the soul of the sick. In the other case his reputation would grow a lot.

Kyo's last stand

In 1901 a ship wrecked with a dead crew onboard on the shores of Cape York in the southern part of the land of the Inughuit. The natives took as much as pos-

sible off the ship as the tide might send the ship to sea again, which actually happened. Especially wood was taken as wood is very rare in the area. The Inughuit were not resistant to the sickness which killed the ship crew. Fast the disease infected the settlements around Cape York. During the winter most of the local people died. Less than ten survived. Among them was Ulloriaq who found in one of the houses a mother and children. With them he made a family.

When the sea ice was strong enough the coming winter the survivors decided to find other human beings further to the north. The first settlement they reached was Issuvissooq. There lived the great shaman Kajorapaluk - alone, because no one wanted to share a settlement together with him. Nobody liked him due to his hot-tempered manners. He was filled by envy and angry threats.

When the survivors arrived to Kyo's settlement, he scornfully welcomed them. He wanted from the look at their poor condition to know what had happened. They told about the illness which killed too many people, and about the problems in getting food, when everyone was ill.

Kyo was totally without feelings or awe for the dead. He began to shout about that he had caused the disease to appear. He had conjured the illness to attack the two settlements at Cape York, because the settlers had denied him access to the place, even he also wanted to barter with them passing white whalers, which usually took place in late July. He told that the illness was revenge for their evil against him. And he began to sing a shaman song in which he promised that similar accidents and disaster which he made hit on the two southern settlements, he now would transfer to catch in on people at the next two northern settlements, because these settlers also made him angry.

The poor survivors who just barely escaped all the calamity became stoned by fear as they realised that they had family staying at these two settlements. With shiver they imagined the suffering a spreading disease would bring.

Without warning Masaitsak, the oldest of the three surviving men from the south, jumped forward Kyo, shouting that he should not force the illness any place else. Then he swung his axe and tried to hit Kyo's head. But Kyo was alert and stepped aside, so the axe only went deep in his shoulder where it got stuck. Kyo grasped the shaft of the ax trying to get it out and at the same time sang a conjuration. The three men became afraid that he should heal himself using his special powers, and then exorcise lots of disasters upon them for revenge. Ulloriaq took his lance and plunged in into the chest of Kyo, who collapsed and became a very silent person.

“You hit streight into my heart,” Kyo whispered, “but take care of your own heart and those of your family. Exactly on that spot disaster will hit you all.” And then he was dead.

The southern survivors left the place and settled among people in the north whom they saved for the awful disease.

Two years later Ulloriaq’s brother climbed a birdmountain. It was slippy, he fel down and landed on his own hand in which he had a knife, which was forced into his body stopping at his heart causing an instent death. Kyo’s prophecy began to come true.

Still years passed. Ulloriaq managed to get a gun from the White Men as paymewnt for work. One day cleaning the gun, a shot was fired through the tent wall. Short after he discovered he had shot his oldest son in the heart.

In 1909 Ussarqak, the last relative of Ulloriaq, arrived together with the Christian missionaries from Westgreenland, where had been visiting for a couple of years and had been baptised and married to a Westgreenlandic girl. The Inughuit began to hear about a altrenativ to the way of the shaman. The priest tried to make them believe that his belief was the stronger, but the Inughuit had the wisdom from their ansestors, which often had given them help in the fight against the forces of nature. Ulloriaq was, however, curious, so he settled close to the priest. One day when returning from a hunt in kayak Ussarqak had an accident with his gun and managed to send a bullet into his own heart. He just lost his wife due to illness, so maybe it was no accident after all.

Now Ulloriaq was alone together with his children and without any support from relatives. If Kyo’s prophecy should still haunt him, he or his children would be next to die. He talked to his wife Kavsaaluk, He talked to old people at the settlement. He talked to the priest. Next year (1912) Ulloriaq and Kavsaaluk was among the first 4 copules to be baptised.

Ulloriaq had the idea that being Christen, the evil power of the old religion would no longer be able to touch him, and he still lived for a decade, dying at an age of 46 years.

Kyo – the shaman

From eyewitnesses like the Americans and narative like Fruechen, Kyo appear to be an absolute person who at time put his own worth and his own ideas above those of the society surrounding him, a very non-Eskimo way of thinking. He acted on the borderline of the rules and normes of the society. That a skilful

and clever shaman might due. This would take more elegance and understanding and concern for the people who the shaman needed to help than Kyo could come up with. Kyo was too self-centred to manage in a good way among other human beings. He was dazzled by his own belief in him self. He ignored the signals the surrounding world tried to send him. Thus, seen from a Inughuit point of view, it was a natural thing to kill him, when he one more time would inflict suffering, sorrow, and leave voids on his fellow citizens. Beside that he had already made him self not liked by spreading lots of bad news.

Kajorapaluk played with fire, and got not only burned the fingers, but his whole body and life. The people give the shaman his respect and add to his power. When the shaman loose the support from his people, he looses the purpos for acting on behalf af the people, and the is no longer need for him. The shaman is always an individualist, but can only survive along with the people, not against it.

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