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A Prayer by Chief Marie Smith Jones,

At the international indigenous conference on climate change "*Snowchange 2005*"

Translated and written by Michael E. Krauss, Professor Emeritus

Snowchange Discussion Paper # 16

1. PRAYER AT SNOWCHANGE MEETING, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA, SEPTEMBER 2005

1.qa:ta:', 'itl' 'uq' uq'dAxdAdza:nts',   Our Father, I plead with you about it ,

'a:nd 'iLt'a' da: 'i:yahL* da:X,   as we are gathered here,

Li'q' ya:yu: k'udzu: 'i:Leh wahd.   in order that everything be well.

'ahnu: 'a:nd 'iLt'a' 'i:yahLinu*,   They who are gathered here,

5. [s?i k'a'L]*   .....

 Li'q' ('ich',) 'ich' q'e:ya'* 'iditah,   That all be put back aright to you,

k'udzu:dahwahd.   in order that [it be done] well.

Li'q' 'ahnu: si(:yi)tl'* yiLinhinu:,   All they who are with me,

L'I'q' q'uhhnu:,   all of them,

10. Li'q' ya:yu:k'a' k'udzu: 'uXa' 'i:Lin'inu.   may everything be well with them.

'ahnu: 'a:nch'['a:, di:yenh(,)]dAdzu: dAtah,*   They hither -- a good ……. in place,

k'udzu: 'i:Leh.   may it be good.

'Al 'ida: GAlAtah da:X   This way of life and

Li'q' ya:yu: q'Al 'ida(:)- 'a'd bad,   all these things which are too-, very, too

        'ida'ya:lAX (k'u-) k'ushiyah yiLeh,

15. qa:ta:' 'iduxdAdza:nts',   Our Father, I beg you,

'Al [yiLi'-'u:dAshiyenh] dA'a:nch;ahd(,)   this ....- ……….. — from here

        q'e' GAdA'A'ch' da:X   when they go back home

'Aw [qi'(d)yiL[ti:ch']. *   you will ……. that.

Li'q' ya:yu:k'a' 'uXa'k'a' k'udzu: 'i:Lin'inu. *   May everything be well with them.

'ida:yu: 'a:ndAl* 'iLt'a' da: 'i:yahL,   These matters we are gathered here for,

20.'Awk'a' k'udzu: 'uXA' 'i:Lin'inu:*, Lich'.   let those be good for them, always.

'ahnu: GAdla: 'a:wch'ahd ('a:Xu) 'isAL'anhLinu:*   They who have traveled from afar,

'AwA'ahdah qa:lah 'i:liht'inhinu:.*   thanks that they care about us.

'AwA'ahdah qa:ta:',   Thank you Our Father.

[shu:beched dA'a'ch'] 'ami:nn ['o:ho:]   ……. ….., Amen, ……. .

Our Father, I plead with you, as we are gathered here, that everything be well. They who are gathered here, ….., that all be put back in order for you, so that it be done well. All those that are here with me, all of them, may everything be well with them. They here – a good ……. in place, may it be good. This way of life, but all these things that are too bad, Our Father, I beg you, these things ….-, ………. when they go back home, from here, you will … that. May everything be well with them. These matters we are gathered here for, that those may go well for them, always. They who have travelled here from afar, thanks that they care about us. Thank you, Our Father......... ……, Amen, …… .

Photo: Tero Mustonen

2. COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

This is Eyak Chief Marie Smith Jones's prayer at the opening of an international indigenous conference on climate change "*Snowchange 2005*", in Anchorage, September 28, 2005. The transcription and translation, May 2017, are by Michael Krauss and Guillaume Leduey, from a videotape provided by Tero Mustonen, Executive Secretary of Snowchange Cooperative, based in Finland. This is the last known recording of spontaneous Eyak text, presumably constituting the entire corpus of 21st-century Eyak text.

A note from Tero Mustonen from Snowchange: *"This unique cultural heritage of the Eyak people is amazing testimony to the power and strength of Chief Marie Smith Jones who we had a privilege to know and work with for years. It was the greatest possible honour that she came to open Snowchange 2005 with her opening prayer. I wish to thank our Steering Committee Member and Alaska Coordinator Victoria Hykes-Steere for all the work she did for Chief Jones over the years and for her wisdom and kindness in assisting with this text, as well as Michael E. Krauss, Professor Emeritus and his team for making this translation possible. We will cherish the living legacy of the Eyak peoples and Chief Marie Smith Jones in our work at the Snowchange Co-op. "*

This prayer text is still more problematical to interpret than Marie's previous prayers, being delivered with a gap of 12 years after those. It is therefore hardly surprising that this text has still more unclear stretches, requiring more speculation and footnote commentary. The sound track, also, is not as clear as the previous ones.

In retrospect, as will be shown in the notes below, this text is not only difficult to interpret fully, but also has an unusual number of surprising forms. According to the transcription, there would be at least two otherwise unattested stems, -k'a'(L) (5), -ti:ch' (17), and perhaps [di:yenh], the first two of which were presumably tested with Lena in 1965 and rejected or not confirmed by her as known stems. There are at least three otherwise unattested bases, i.e. combinations of verbs and preverbs otherwise unattested: 'iLt'a' -a 3 times, 'plural gather', with singular stem (2, 4, 19); o-ch' q'e:ya' dA-ta 'be restored for o' (6); and o-lah 'i:lih-t'e/~ 'be mindful about o' (22). There are 2 uses of 'ida: otherwise unattested (3, 19); and morphologically otherwise unattested 'u:dAshiyah (16), if correctly identified; likewise si(:yi)tl' (8), if read *?siyAtl', which would make yet another otherwise unattested base. Such a score of otherwise unattested items in this literally terminal one minute and 45 seconds of Eyak seems highly surprising, especially given the syntactic raggedness and repetitiveness of the text, which would give one to expect faultiness rather than eloquence. The difficulties in establishing clearly divided sentences will be evident. The sentence 'may (everything) be well (with them)' is repeated 5 times (3, 10, 12, 18, 20). The prayer appropriately wishes the assembled well and their task well, but it does not refer explicitly to climate change.

Line 2. 'iLt'a' 'behind each other; together', treated as preverb and not requiring dA- classifier as would a preverbal still treated as with reciprocal o with an intransitive verbs. There is a verb base attested otherwise in 'iLt'a' –'a'ch' 'plural come together'. Here, however the verb form 'i:yahL, Neuter perfective with the stem -a 'singular go', is attested 3 times in this prayer, also lines 4 and 19. Not otherwise attested in the whole Eyak corpus, this somewhat startling reversion to the stem for 'singular go' rather than that for 'plural go' (which is otherwise attested with 'iLt'a' for 'gather'), this form may be an innovation at this very last stage of Eyak, as it is used here 3 times; or it might in principle be traditionally an optional alternative.

Line 4. Phonetically ['i:yahL,Lidu:], with the[- Lidu:] as though an afterthought decision to relativize. At first uncertain, but the [-d-] may well be voiced, to be interpreted as a denasalized /-n-/.

Line 5. Phonetically to Krauss [sik'a'L], s- especially unclear, possibly L- instead of s-, but no verb stem *-k'a'(L) is otherwise attested, or possessed noun stem *-ka'L. Leduey suggests dik'ah 'no', verbalizing change of intention, where -L would be the truncated beginning of the next sentence. A form sik'a'L would have to be first person singular Active perfective of a verb with unknown stem * -k'a' or *-ka'L, or 1s possessed noun stem *-k'a'L; [Lik'a'L] would have to be a Neuter imperfective verb with stem *-k'a'L.

Line 6. Phonetically perhaps [q'e:yan'?] with second vowel of intermediate grade, some nasalization, where ? may be weak [X], The closest semantically plausible preverb is q'e:ya' 'return to state of rest', for an otherwise unattested base q'e:ya' O-(L-)ta 'put O back in order, restore order to O'; less likely q'e:ya:n 'back down (to a surface)'.

Line 8. Uncertain, phonetically [si:yitl'], -tl' unclear. Conceivably *? siyAtl', 'we me manually', as some kind of lexicalization, otherwise unattested, except for what would be morphoplogically contrasting o-ya:tl' 'with o's permission' (< o-y-tl' 'with o's had').

Line 11. Line begins clearly with 'they [who have come?] hither, but that is evidently truncated with 'a:, phonetically perhaps [A:] or [AA] in two pulses, falling tone, probably a vocalized pause. That is followed by orthographic di:yenh, second vowel open front, somewhat nasalized and aspirated, non-canonic phonologically for Eyak. No form resembling that, apparently a noun, is otherwise attested. Leduey hears [di'ehd], but such is not identifiable here either. That is followed by what seems to be -dAdzu: dAtah, clearly , except for the first reduced syllable, stems -dzu: adjective 'good' and -tah classificatory verb, 'a good … is in position', where, most simply, from a syntactic point of view considering the rest, [di:yenh] is a d-class noun, possibly /di:yah/, otherwise unattested, and both prefixes are d- qualifier.

Lines 16-17. yiLi'- intention unclear, may end with faint -g-; followed by what may be 'u:d-A-shiyah 'bad thing there', an otherwise unattested form mophologically. Then the 'from (right?) here' (dA- *ipse* unclear, perhaps unintended as such) may nicely belong with 'when they go back home'; or conceivably, if 'when they go back home' is syntactically unconnected, parenthetical, the 'from here' might be connected with line 17. Line 17 appears to and with a verb ending the sentence; the stem with fading voice appears phonetically to be [-ti:ch'] or [-ti:dj], otherwise unattested, with a clear prefix yi-, most likely including second person singular subject pronoun, referring to the addressee 'Our Father. This may possibly be in a future qi'yi-, if we allow for the preceding qi'd- to be not a preverb, but to end with an extraneous unintended -d-. In that case translation might be '(I plead that) you will … it'. The preceding 'Aw must be the non-human object of a transitive verb, and it must refer to 'this bad thing there that you will … (remove?)' possibly connected with 'from here', though the demonstratives are inconsistent.

Line 18. Line must stand as a sentence alone, as the indirect object reference must be to plural humans, given presence of enclitic -inu:. The repetition of the optative enclitic -k'a' is unnecessary or ungrammatical. The sentence itself is not only repetitive, but unconnected to the following sentence, with subject 'we'.

Line 19. Phonetically ['ide:yAwanhdAl], with umlauted -da:- before -yu:, itself with reduced vowel, and perhaps syntactically problematical. Perhaps this is better read as 'ida:yu:wahd-dAl 'these matters for the sake of which', an otherwise unattested morphological construction. Leduey hears de:wahddAl 'what (we are gathered) for the sake of', simpler but problematical

phonologically, at least given the initial 'i-, and the disyllabicity of the stem -de:yA-. The basic meaning of the line is nevertheless clear.

Line 20. Initial 'Aw is here interpreted as referring to 'these matters' of the line above, and the indirect object 'them' refers to the 'we' thereof. A better translation might be 'let them go well with them'.

Line 21. Krauss hears phonetically [GAdla:'a:nwch'ahd 'a:Xu 'i:nsAL'ahLinu:], which has semantically to be interpreted as heard by Leduey, leaving ['a:Xu] unidentified.

Line 22. Phonetically ['i:linntinhinu:], with stem-initial hard to hear as ejective, but such issemantically demanded, there being no attested theme 'i:lih-ta. The base o-lah 'i:lih-t'e/~ is not otherwise attested, 'be mentally about o', presumably 'be mindful about o'.

Line 24. [shubechet] unknown and not Eyak even phonetically; the stress on [be]. The ['o:ho:] at the end cannot phonetically be Eyak either. Two Alaskan Orthodox priests consulted could not recognize an origin for [shubechet], though conceivably a preceding *ny/ne i pri/sno I vo veki/ veko/v* ('now and eternally age of ages'), disregarding Slavonic stresses, and with thorough garbling, might conceivably yield that, especially with the expected v > b . Still more strangely though, [shubechet] is followed by [dA'a'ch'], evidently the Eyak verb stem 'plural go' with dA-classifier. Any preverbal context for that is missing here, though ironically dA'a'ach' is precisely what we might have expected, in the form 'idi'a'ch'L instead of 'i:yahL after the preverbal 'iLt'a' for 'are gathered' in lines 2, 4 19 above (see footnote to line 2). The 'o:ho: following 'Ami:nn can neither be Eyakn or anything from Russian, but perhaps Tlingit, though there was no Yakutat Tlingit Orthodox tradition from which Marie might have taken that.
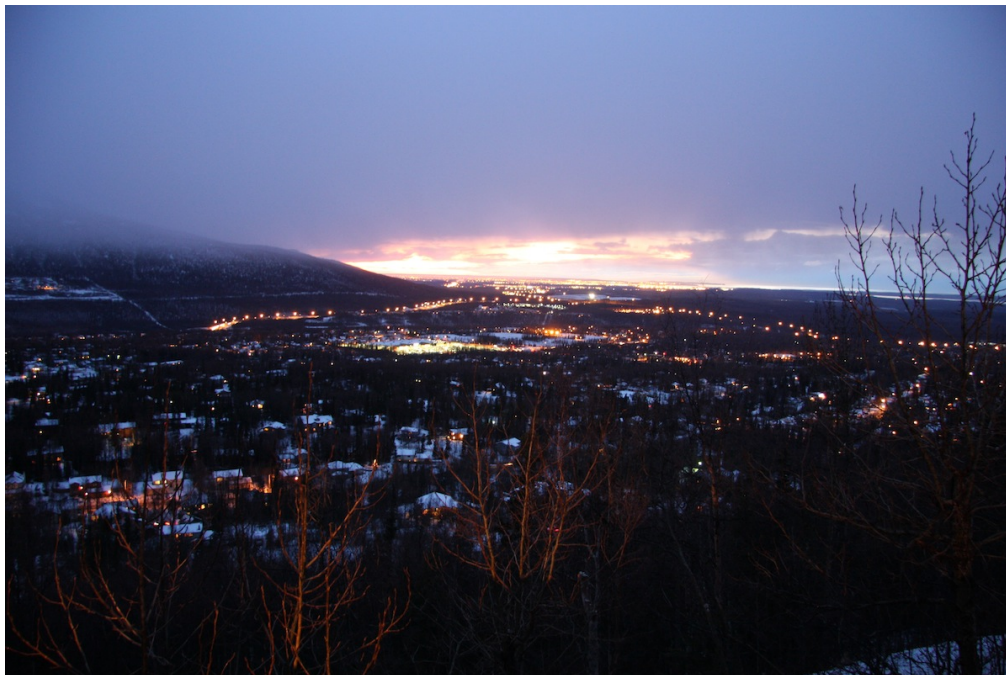

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