Dream Narration among Eastern Arctic Canadian Inuit

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Abstract

Dealing with dream among Inuit means dealing with orality since in this society a particular dream finds its full signification only through its narration and sharing with others. However, and contrary to what occurred in the past – more or less until the conversion to Christianity –, dream sharing has for several decades declined for a number of reasons and has therefore largely lost its strong social aspect. While individual contemporary Inuit discourse on this matter remains largely consistent with earlier dream perceptions, a lot of Inuit do not share their dreams anymore, or only occasionally. Interestingly though, many of them, from all generations, state that they regret this situation. For instance some elders think that the serious social problems that affect young people, suicide on the first place, could originate from the fact that youngsters do not tell their dreams anymore. The latter explain that were raised in families where this practice had stopped, extinguished little by little by the major changes which took place in the Canadian Inuit societies. Some people are quite aware of the situation, express it openly and wish to change it. They are convinced that re-initiating dream narration and its collective sharing could probably contribute to significantly improve both individual and social lives in the communities. This paper illustrates these various aspects.

It also aims at showing on the one hand the interest of an entry into orality through dream and dream narration from the anthropological perspective, and on the other that it is fully relevant from the Inuit point of view, as they commented themselves during my fieldwork.

Keywords: Dream, narration, orality, social practices, Nunavut, Mittimatalik/Pond Inlet

I here address the topic of dreaming in contemporary Eastern Arctic Canadian Inuit society, focussing specifically on the present status of dream narration. I will therefore not discuss what would be for instance a typology of common themes encountered in Inuit dreams, but rather concentrate on the social aspect or implementation of dreaming. Indeed whereas dreaming is by essence a personal or private experience, telling a dream turns it into a narration and therefore a shared experience with potentially collective consequences. Dealing with dream means dealing with orality since in the Inuit society a particular dream only finds its full signification through its narration. Dream sharing has during several decades weakened more and more for a number of reasons and largely lost its strong social aspect. The present analysis is based in particular on data collected during recent field works in Mittimatalik/Pond Inlet in the north of Baffin Island, in 2002/2003, 2005 and 2006.

Through interviews with several elders and a young couple, my goal is to establish an overview of the individual and collective importance presently granted to dream in general. I will emphasize both the continuities between our time and the past and the changes, in particular in regard to the social implementation of dreams. Such presentation seeks at providing some milestones for pursuing research into a topic acknowledged as highly relevant by Inuit from all generations. An historical review of ethnographic research on Inuit dream will allow us to reach and understand better the present day.

Before proceeding further, one important point to mention is that dream experiences are not uniform. This is reflected in the Inuit terminology, which distinguishes between two main types of experiences. *Sinnaktuumaniq*, a term found all over the Eastern Canadian Arctic ("dream" in English), is a kind of generic term. Another common experience is *aqtuqsinniq* (North Baffin, *uqumangirniq* in South Baffin and Nunavik), often translated by "sleep paralysis" or "Eskimo paralysis" in English. It is a parasomnia or sleep disorder that not all Inuit consider as a form of dream. Therefore in this paper, I will only address *sinnaktuumaniq*.

Inuit dream: classical ethnographical accounts

Data on Inuit dreaming have been collected through time since roughly two centuries, two and half for Labrador and almost three for Greenland. However, although the overall ethnography on Inuit is extremely rich, that specifically dedicated to dreams – dream typology, content, conditions of narration, interpretation, uses of dreams, etc – is much more limited. Still, from major authors such as Knud Rasmussen, Lucien Turner, Diamond Jenness and William Thalbitzer, just to mention a few, a lot has been learnt about Inuit dreams. The most important aspects of dreaming identified can be summarized as follows:

– Dreams and shamanism were strongly related. Indeed dreams were often attributed an important role in the initiation of shamans (*angakkuit*). K. Rasmussen has gathered significant data on this matter, for instance from the Copper Inuit: "A would-be shaman must be made suitable right from birth. Even as soon as the afterbirth has been extruded the infant is lifted up and allowed to look through it, a ceremony that gives the child second sight. Later on such children are called: 'those who have eyes in the dark'. [...] The child who was chosen and wedded to the shaman's art soon became haunted by dreams; people said of them: *nutarqat hingatoomalerpagtut*[1]. The dreams had always to be revealed to the people of the village, and were then interpreted as particular and strange omens; and it was on these dreams that the shamans built up their special knowledge of all those things that are hidden to ordinary people." (1932: 27) The same author (1930a: 53) was also told by the shaman Igjugaarjuk from the Caribou Inuit that he had never seen his helping spirits while he was awake, but only in dreams. From the Copper Inuit, D. Jenness (1922: 200) also reported that many of the shamans' discoveries were made through dreams. For instance the shaman Ilatsiak asserted that his familiar spirit often visited him in his sleep to reveal what was about to happen. And whenever he dreamed of small knives, he knew that some children were sick.

– Dreaming was a strong mean of communication with the other worlds, that of the spirits and non human beings and of the dead (*e.g.* RASMUSSEN 1931: 213). Dreams could also play a role in healing and curing diseases. In a case reported by K. Rasmussen (1930b: 111), a woman who was ill in her right arm was then helped by a shaman who had dreamt about the origin of the disease and how she would be cured. Moreover, the dead could communicate their wish to have their name (*atiq*) given to a new-born through the dreams of the mother (*e.g.* the testimony from NUNAVIK OF SALUMI MITIARJUK NAPPAALUK 1994: 79).

– Some Inuit also considered dreams as a tool of prediction or foretelling, for instance to discover where to go for hunting or how to recover from a difficult situation such as being lost (*e.g.* the testimony of Aipilik Innuksuk, *in* MACDONALD 1998: 186-187).

Generally speaking people commonly looked for the assistance of shamans to interpret the meaning of their dreams.

Since the Freudian paradigm mainstream Western modern conceptions of dream consider the oniric phenomenon to be a deeply personal experience. For the Inuit instead, dreaming had strong collective and social dimensions, as it does in many other societies around the world (*e.g.* TEDLOCK 1992 [1987]; PERRIN 1992; PAROT 2001).

[1] We here keep Rasmussen's orthography.

Therefore in such a representation, dream telling and sharing would have a tremendous importance. According to a widespread Inuit conception, all dreams with a significant content had to be told and correctly interpreted in order not to alter the health of the dreamer or even to make him, or her, die. Indeed sleep, dream, disease and death are all linked to one another through the movements of *tarniq*, the shadowy and immortal component of the person, his vital principle. The bond between *tarniq* and the body (*timi*) is however not very strong: *tarniq* can indeed leave the body temporarily for instance during dreaming, where it starts wandering in the invisible world. If for whatever reason, *tarniq* does not re-integrate the body, disease and maybe death will follow. *Tarniq* can also be stolen, which makes the person sick, but a shaman can always try to bring it back (*e.g.* THALBITZER 1930: 93-95; RASMUSSEN 1931: 213-217; WEYER 1932: 321-327).

Keeping a dream secret would more than likely bring misfortune to the person and maybe also to the community, as would also do the non-revelation of any wrong doings or of a miscarriage for a woman. Mariano Aupilaarjuk, an elder from Kangiq&iniq/Rankin Inlet, recalled that: "if you were keeping a wrong-doing hidden you would be anxious, you would become so anxious that you would get sick from keeping this inside you. You could try to keep it hidden, but the mind is very visible, even if it is only thoughts." (OOSTEN *et al*. 1999: 22 [Inuktitut], 23 [English]) On the contrary, sharing dreams could only be beneficial to the dreamer and his relatives.

The conversion to Christianity

The advent of Christianity brought a number of new perspectives about dreams among Inuit communities. As a general rule, for the Christian conception, dreams, contrary to visions, have always been a deeply suspicious experience, if not a testimony of the Devil, although the Bible makes on several occasions reference to dreams[2] as F. Laugrand reminds us (2001). In fact the attitude of most missionaries has been quite ambivalent towards this phenomenon. Let's for instance consider what happened in Labrador where Inuit were Christianized by the Moravian Brethren who settled in the region as early as 1771 in Nain, roughly one century before religious contacts took place in the rest of the Canadian Arctic. B. Richling reported (1989: 158) that, after hearing a man in the community of Hopedale recount a dream in 1805, a missionary wrote in the mission diary: "we often hear the Esquimaux relate dreams, and certainly it is, that several of our Esquimaux have been led to very serious reflections, by occasion of a remarkable, and

[2] The Christian attitude towards dream has been double, as shown by J. Le Goff (1985): on the one hand dream is present at the main stages of a Christian life (conversion, contact with God, martyr), but on the other hand the Church has always seen the Devil as being behind most dreams. Following the tradition from Antiquity, Christianity makes the distinction between the real dreams sent by God and received by the saints and the martyrs, and the false ones sent by the Devil. Since the differentiation is not always easy, the Church preferred Christians to swerve from dreams.

perhaps terrifying dream, and have been convinced of their lost and wretched state". He added then: "we do not encourage a belief in the fulfilment of dreams, nor pay any regard to them in general". On the other hand, at the same time, the missionaries were eager to get signs of acceptance of the new faith by the pagans, and therefore Inuit were encouraged to offer testimonies of the "state of their heart" during public confessions and also private conversations with the missionaries (*op. cit*.: 157). This type of confessions was nothing new for Inuit anyhow. During these occasions, it became common to relate recent dreams that would indicate readiness for conversion.

During the whole process of conversion to Christianity, which extended over about six decades when considering the whole Canadian Eastern Arctic (excluding Labrador), and proceeded under the preaching of missionaries and Inuit proselytes (LAUGRAND 2002), dreaming kept its strong social fundamental aspect, although contents of the dreams became heavily impregnated by the new religion and its new characters. Dreams of Jesus became frequent according to a number of records, including testimonies I recorded during my own fieldwork in North Baffin.

From conversion to present day

I have so far either referred to what I called previously the classical ethnography, meaning articles and books published before roughly the 1930', or to recent studies published after 1985, and more often after 2000. Indeed, since the mid-1980' a number of authors have produced important contributions to the study of Inuit dreaming. In chronological order: N. Hallendy (1985), who collected valuable data interviewing elders from Kinngait/Cape Dorset and produced a preliminary taxonomy of dreams, in 1989 the very interesting paper by B. Richling on Inuit dreams in Labrador at the time of conversion. In 2001 two major contributions on the topic were issued: F. Laugrand's article on ambiguity and heteronomy of dreaming among Inuit elders and the bilingual volume edited by S. Kolb and S. Law, in the series of recollection from Nunavut elders carried out at the Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit and consisting of interviews of elders by students. This document constitutes a very valuable source of data. In 2002, M. Therrien published her analysis of the dreams of a shaman-to-be from East Greenland which were originally collected by W. Thalbitzer in 1923. I myself also contributed to the field with a first paper given at a symposium organised in Paris in 2004 (BORDIN 2004), and in 2006 the co-direction of a documentary film in which several dreams told by Inuit from Mittimatalik can be heard[3].

[3] Film on DV Cam, entitled "J'ai rêvé/Sinnaktulauqpunga", 40 minutes, French and English subtitles, produced by GSARA (http://www.gsara.be), Brussels, 2006. Co-directed with Renaud De Putter.

> Between these two periods, the pre-Christian and the completion of the conversion era on the one side and the contemporary time on the other, roughly between the 1940-50' and the 1980-90', other major changes took place in Canadian Inuit societies such as their settlement in permanent communities, the schooling of children, the killing of dogs, the introduction of wage-earning work, the increase of English language, all contributing to a dramatic transformation of the socio-economical conditions which affected the individual and collective daily rhythms (see also BORDIN 2005). It is also during this period that dream telling and sharing steadily weakened. During this very same time, to my knowledge, ethnographic accounts were quasi mute on the subject, at least those dealing with the Eastern Arctic. Was it by lack of interest from the anthropologists' side? Maybe, as this was also noticed by others working in different societies[4]. Was it the reluctance of most Inuit, now all devout Christians, to talk about a topic so deeply linked to shamanism? This is very likely. Even young Inuit had often difficulties in getting older people to tell about certain aspects of how life was before Christianity. Sandra Pikujak Katsak, from Mittimatalik, who was born in 1973, experienced it as she reported in a book about the life of three Inuit women: "I was always curious about how it was back then, back when my grandparents were growing up. I always wondered about the shamans. Nobody was willing to talk about them or answer my questions. I asked all the time. I asked my parents, I asked a lot. I guess I was the kind of kid who asked a lot of questions. "Why? Why? Why" I was genuinely curious, I really wanted to know. I guess that they got tired of all my questions. They never said much to me, my parents, my grandparents, they never talked about shamans much when I was a kid." (WACHOWICH 1999: 244)

Contemporary Inuit society from the elders' statements and perspectives

In the last 20 years or so there has been quite significant changes, including the weakening pressure from established churches[5]. It has now become possible to discuss more openly touchy subjects such as shamanism. The whole series of recollection of elders' life by Arctic College students provides the best evidence of these changes.

Interestingly, recent contributions about dreams tend to show that contemporary Inuit discourse on this matter remains largely consistent with earlier dream perceptions: use of dreams for communicating with the dead and in particular for the transmission of name from deceased to new born, for receiving messages from other realms of reality, and for various predictions. We also need to acknowledge that some Inuit never paid much or only little attention to their dreams (*e.g.* the testimony of Victor Tungilik, *in* OOSTEN &

[4] B. Tedlock wrote for instance in the preface of the book *Dreaming* (1992 [1987]: IX): "Universal though dreaming may be, when I convened a week-long advanced seminar on the subject at the School of American Research in Santa Fe in 1982, leading to the publication of this book, it had become so marginalized within anthropology that it took an extended effort to find ten appropriate participants."

[5] For instance, many elders mention and regret that a lot of young people do not read the Bible or do not go to church regularly anymore, and are not respectful enough of religious principles such as not working and hunting on Sundays.

LAUGRAND 1999: 81-90, 128-129 [Inuktitut], 73-80, 114 [English]). However this is not the most common conception and for many people of different generations, dreams have kept in general much of their importance and attributes. At the same time, and this is a major point, most Inuit, and not only from younger generations, do not share their dreams anymore, or only occasionally. Parallel to the general decrease of storytelling within Inuit families, and within the frame of an overall lack of communication in most households (PAUKTUUTIT 2005: 7), dream narration is no longer a regular practice, as witnessed by the following testimony of a man born in 1932[6]:

> *Ujjirijarali una taissumani ajuriqsuijikkunnit tikitausimalauqqaaratta sinnaktuq&uta sinnakturatta tavva iqqumaratta unikkaaq&uta sinnaktuattinnik, maannakkuuliqtuq sinnakturaluaratta unikkaarijumagaluaqtugut pitaqaqquujiqattannginniqsaulirmat*. (GAMAILI QILUQISAAQ 2003)
>
> "I remember this, in former times before the [Anglican] missionaries had arrived, when we had a dream and when we woke up, we told our dream, but nowadays when we have a dream and even if we want to tell it, we seemingly do not do it so much."

Relying on various statements from Mittimatalingmiut I will now illustrate and comment this fundamental aspect of a particular and somehow *a priori* paradoxical situation of a dream experience still very much considered as highly meaningful but also deprived of its former collective character..

Dreaming is indeed still perceived as a mode of communication:

> *Iittiaq atuqtaujuq suli suurlu qaujititaugiaruma sinnaktukkut qaujijunnaqtunga, suurlu aturiaqa-nngitannik aturuluujaruma sinnaktukkulluunnit suli maanna aturunnaqtuq.* (MAATA KUNUK 2003)
>
> "Certainly, it [dream] is still used today, for instance when someone wants me to be aware of something through a dream I can know it, for instance if I do something that I should not do, knowing through dreaming is still used today."

It can also display valuable practical uses:

> *Ilanginnut uvangali uvannulli ii, imanna pilauqsimagama sikituuqtunga, sikituura surattaqpuq siniliqtaqpunga sinilirama imanna sinnaktusittaqpunga imannauna aaqqigunnaqtuq asuilaak iqqumarama sinnaktura malik&ugu sanagakkut taimanna ingirrasilauqsimajunga, sinnaktura malik&ugu.* (GAMAILI QILUQISAAQ 2003)
>
> "For some people, for me yes, for us [dream is useful], this happened to me, when I was out hunting on my skidoo, my skidoo broke down, and when I went to sleep, I had a dream about how to fix it, and then when I woke up, I fixed it following my dream, then I was able to get home, following my dream."

[6] The quotes recorded during my fieldwork mention the name of the interviewee, as agreed with them, and the year of recording.

Notwithstanding whereas dream, through its occurrence and content, is still meaningful for many Inuit, the practice of dream telling has strongly decreased compared to what elders experienced in their childhood, as told by most of those who were interviewed, for instance:

> *Ii unikkaapalauqsimagaluarmata sinnakturijaminik maanna sinnaktuminik unikkaaqtumik tusalauqsimattiaqquujinngiliqtungalu, uvangalu unikkaarajunngiliqtunga sinnaktugijangnik.* (ISIMAILI KATSAK 2003)
>
> "Yes, people used to tell their dreams [in the past], now I don't think that I have heard anybody telling his dreams, and even myself I don't talk about my dreams."

This situation of non-telling has obviously serious consequences, both on individual and collective levels. First, if you do not tell your dreams you tend to forget them, said Jaiku Piitaluusi (*pers. comm*.). Furthermore, the non-narration of dreams can even lead to lose one's ability of dreaming (Celestin Iqqijuq, *pers. comm*). Yet, another person made a clear link between the actual lower usefulness of dreams and the fact that people do not talk about them:

> *Qanukiaq, ilanginnut ii atuutiqaqtuqai, maannali sinnakturasungnaqquujinngilirmat unikkaarunnannginirmuqai, taissumani tamaanituinnaq nunaqaqattasungaq&uta unikkaaruluujaqpalauqsimagatta sinnakturilauqtattinnik, sinnaktugijattinnik.* (ISIMAILI KATSAK 2003)
>
> "I don't know [whether dreams are useful], for some yes, maybe it has usefulness, now it seems that we don't have dreams, maybe because we don't talk about our dreams, but in former times when we were still living on the land, we used to tell about the dreams we had."

The role of churchmen has obviously been extremely important in the change of Inuit behaviour towards dreams as recalled for instance by Juanasi Aariak:

> *Surusiullungali makkuktunga tusaqattaqtunga ilaanni sinnaktulauqpaktunga kappiasuktunga iqqumaraangama alianaigusuktualuvaktunga alianai sinikturuluunnirama iqqumaraangama alianaigususikaallaktunga taimaisuungulauqtunga, tusaqattaqtunga sinnaktuqtunik unikkaaqattaqtunik, qanuimmallikiaq taimanna sinnaktusuungunngilanga ilaanni isumalauqpaktunga tavva qallunaamit ajuriqsuijiuqquuqtumit Mikinniqsauqquuqtumit tusaqattalauqtunga, sinnaktugguuq tukiqanngimmata amisualuigguuq tukiqanngimmata, isumaliqtunga taimannainasugillugit sinnaktuit tukiqarasuginngitakka.* (JUANASI AARIAK 2003)
>
> "When I was a child, a young person, I used to hear things, sometimes I dreamed that I was really scared, and when I woke up I was really glad that it was only a dream, it was good that I was only sleeping, I was like that. I used to hear people talking about their dreams and to wonder why I didn't dream like they did, then I heard from a Qallunaaq, from a minister, probably from Mikiniqsaq[7], I heard that dreams are meaningless, that many dreams are not true, I started to

[7] Mikiniqsaq, "the smaller", was the nickname given by the Inuit to Reverend J. H Turner by comparison to his colleague H. Duncan who was called Anginiqsaq, "the bigger"; these two missionaries were the founders of the

think that dreams don't make sense."

As a consequence, since dreams were considered to be meaningless by missionaries, there was no need or justification for sharing them with other people, not even to care about them. And also, as Mariano Aupilaarjuk said: "Now [since we have Christianity] we keep things hidden. Only God knows. These things will all come out on Judgment Day." (OOSTEN *et al*. 1999: 22 [Inuktitut], 23 [English])

This religious neglect of dreams has reached the present time as we can infer from what a young woman, raised in a very religious family, told me: when she thinks that she has a dream which looks real, according to her words, she tells it to her mother who then systematically answers not to rely on dreams.

But on the whole it seems that, beyond differences due to family life history, religious conviction, social involvement, etc, many elders do regret that dreams are nowadays not as often shared as they used to be in the past, leading to a kind of vicious circle that we can implicitly deduce from the following statement:

Unikkaanginnarunniirakkit sinnaktuttiaraaluqquujiqaujaraluakka unikkaarijariaksaq ajunna-niqsaulirmat maanna. (GAMAILI QILUQISAAQ 2003)

"Because I do not tell [my dreams], even when they seem to be good dreams, telling them is more difficult today."

In the conclusion of his paper, F. Laugrand (2001) underlined that in the aetiology of elders, suicide among young Inuit, which is such a dramatic social phenomenon nowadays, could partly be explained by the fact that they do not share their dreams and experiences, thus not gaining from the benefit of confession. This is a valid observation, but to this statement I would add the following: couldn't it be that young Inuit do not tell and share dreams because they were raised in families where it has stopped to be a rule for decades? In a culture where observation and repetition of adults' gestures and practices was always a key process in learning modes by children and youngsters, such a forsaking could only have the consequences that we all witness today. Despite this situation, the desire to somehow reverse the trend seems present among some young people, in particular when dealing with traumatic events. This brings me to my last point.

Anglican mission in Mittimatalik in 1929.

A study case: the dreams of a young couple

An 18 years old young man from Mittimatalik gave me in 2003 the transcript of a dream he had a couple of years earlier and in which one of his friends committed suicide. This is narrated thereafter:

> *Ilaannikkut sinnaktuliraangama suliqquujivakkaluaq&utik ilangit sulijunnanngikkaluaq&utik. Kappianaqtuniglu sinnaktuqpak&unga atausiu&unga piqatialugilauqtara sinnakturillugu imminiirnialiqtillugu aittariqattaqtara imannaulaurmat isaaqsannguaq&uni paliisikkuni pijaunialirmagguuq pijaujumanngi&&uni qukiutimik piallak&uni imminik niaquagut qukinguarnialiq&uni uvannut tavvauvutiilaukak&uni tuqulluni. Ugguaqqattaqtunga uqautilauq-simannginnakku sinnakturiniraq&ugu asuilaak sulijualuulluni aullaqsimalauqsimagamalu uqautijunnalaunnginnakku tikisimaliqtillunga uqautilauqsimannginnakku few days later imminiiq&uni ilinniarvingmii&&unga uqaujjaugama nalulittialauqsimajunga.*
> *Amma qangattiaratаaq sinnaktuq&unga qaujititaunasugililauqtunga Guutimut imminiiriaqa-nnginnirmik suurlu imanna sinnaktulaurama nuliaksaralu avikkannut qanuq piniariaksaq nalulirama imminiiq&unga ilakka qaujingmata imminiiqtunga mamiagiliq&ugu uvangalu timianut utirunnaillillunga ugguarnaqtualuulluni ilagijattinni nagliksaqtittilluni takullugit ainnaraaluk qaujilauqtara. Qiallunga iqqumalauqtunga aittarusuluamut taimali imminiiqaunngikkuma.* (JUUMI INUGUQ 2003)

> "Sometimes when I have dreams, some look real, others do not. I do sometimes scary dreams and one I dreamt of my good friend before he killed himself, and I regret that I did not do anything, that is what happened: he broke the entrance of the police station, he was going to be arrested, he did not want to be arrested, he took a gun and before he shoot himself in the head, he said good bye to me and he died. I deeply regret that I did not talk about it, it came true and since I was away, I could not tell him. Even when I came back, I did not tell him and few days later, he killed himself when I was at school, somebody told me, I did not know what to do.
> And not long ago, when I was dreaming I thought it was a message to me from God, that we should not commit suicide, and the dream was like this: with my girl friend, we were separated and I did not know what to do. I committed suicide and my relatives learnt that I killed myself, then I was sorry for them, and I could not go back to my body, this made me really sorry, regretful and seeing my relatives was scary, that is what I found out. I woke up crying because of the remorse that I should not have killed myself."

In the following weeks, he gave me other transcripts of some of his recent dreams and also of his girl friend, Luuri Inualuk, and one evening the three of us had a long discussion. What appeared really striking to me after the conversation with the young couple and after I had a closer look at the transcripts of their dreams, is the connection that can be established between dreams and death in general and suicide in particular. I want to stress here that they have spontaneously and quickly talked about death through a number of occasions all along our discussion. They both said to consider these dreams as being scary since they are so powerful. Dream is something you receive from outside.

Once the dream has occurred, one remains with the question of what to do with its content. And here comes again the uneasy issue of telling it and to whom. Juumi relates:

> *Ilaannikkut sinnaktuq&uni inungnut unikkausirillugit ilangit ukpirusuluarunnaqquujinngit-tualuungmata salluqquujinaqtuinnaq&uni ukpirijaunngi&&uni taimannaruluujaq isumana-qattaqtuq inuuqatinut unikkaarasukkaluaq&ugit ukpirijaujunnanngi&&uni taimannauqquuqtuq uqalaluarunnanngittut ilangit.* (Juumi INUGUQ 2003)
>
> "Sometimes when you tell your dream to people, some of them tend not to believe you, and you just feel that you are lying, when they don't believe you. You end up thinking like that when you tell your dream to other people, and they don't believe you, I think that's why some people don't want to talk about their dreams."

The wish to tell dreams, or some of them, is still quite vivid, with the underlying idea that not using dreams for a common benefit could be a sort of waste. And indeed the dream experience has not completely vanished from the collective life. It happens for instance quite regularly that people, often elders, phone to the local radio and tell a dream that they had recently. The young man also suggested that students could start talking about their dreams at school. Besides, he said that he appreciated very much telling and talking to me about his dreams. I have to say here that it has been all together easy to get quite a number of people telling dreams and that the pleasure of narration was always really perceptible.

Towards the end of the discussion came a really interesting and moving insight when the young man told his dream of the previous night, showing in particular how dream and conscious life episodes can be entangled in the narration, a very striking characteristic of Inuit dreams. I cite it entirely for sake of clarity:

> *Unnuaq sinnaktumaqqaugama siniliqtillunga sinnaktuqqaugama, ii quviasuktunga alianaigusuk-tunga sinnaktumaqqaugama suuqaimma aturumajara kisu aturumajara atuqpallialiq&ugu. Suuqaimma tukisiumavallialiqtunga sinnaktukkut imanna pivvallianiarninni tukisivallialiqtunga, qanuq tamanna quviasutigijara saqqitumallugu uqallagasuqattarumaliqtunga sinnaktuqtunga taimanna uqallagumajaraangama, uqallattaraangama quviananiqsamit saqqitittijunnaqtujaaq-paktunga taimanna sinnaktuqtunga uannaasikaallaqqaummigama asuilaak uvanga unuqatinnit isuliqtunga ikajuqpalungaqai uqallaqatiginasukpaglugit taimanna qanuinngittuq?*
> Luuri amma Guy Bordin*: ii*
> *Taimannarujuk sinnaktuqqaugama unnuaq ilangagut tukisiumanngikkaluaq&ugu, ilanga qauji-valliraluaq&ugu, ii taimannaaluk sinnaktujaangimut sinnakturjumiqqaugama quvianannirmik aittijauqquuqtunga qanukiaq. Quviasuqqauvunga iqqumaqtunga. Qanuittuinnaaluk sinnak-tunnaqtuq. Uannaakaallakkama, ii taimanna taanna inuk uqallaqatigiijara sinnaktukkut taanna uvannut uqaqqaummat taimaguuq tavva kajusijariaqaraluaqpunga. Makkuktuulluta uqalla-giaqaqtilluta uqallagunnanngi&&uni ajunnasivallianarmat tisittinaq&uni amma ningasarai-nnaq&uni, sinnaktukkut qaujiqqauvunga ii.* (JUUMI INUGUQ 2003)

> "I dreamt last night, when I fell asleep, I had a dream. Yes, I'm happy, I'm pleased because I had a dream, for sure, when I start to do what I had wanted to do. Yes, for sure, I'm starting to understand what I have to do from my dreams, now, I want to let people know, I dreamt that I want to talk to people, when I want to talk, I feel that if I talk, I can make things better, when I dreamt that I was really amazed. So, I'm going to start and talk to people, maybe help people, try and talk to them, is it alright like that?"
> Both Luuri and I (Guy Bordin) answered, "yes" to him. And he went on:
> "I had a dream like that, last night, I don't quite understand all of it, but I understand a part of it, yes I was really amazed about that kind of a dream, I think I've been given something that is wonderful or I don't know. I was happy when I woke up. You can dream about all kinds of things. I was really amazed, yes, the person in my dream, that I was talking to said that I have to go ahead and do that. We young people, when we have to talk but when we can't, it gets more difficult, harder to talk and you get angry very fast, I found out through a dream, yes."

He interpreted this dream as a guideline on how to deal with dream.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is important to stress that dream conceptions among many Inuit, including those of younger generations, show a strong continuity with that of the past: dreaming is a mean of communication and reception from the outside, dreaming is connected with death and therefore life (name transmission, omen), dream constitutes a potential danger and a waste for action when it is not told. But how to share dreams nowadays? Elders and adults rarely relate their dreams, for a number of reasons that I have partly evoked previously, and young Inuit do not have "model" anymore. In this sense, although the dream has largely kept its strong signification, its lack of sharing and uses parallels the more general decrease of oral transmission between generations and between people, a crucial issue for contemporary Inuit societies. Some elders and young people are quite aware of the situation, express it openly and wish to change the present situation. Many Inuit are convinced that re-initiating dream narration and their collective sharing could probably contribute to significantly improve both individual and social lives in the communities. The recent reinvestigation of the field of Inuit dreaming by anthropologists finds here a practical application: following the status of dream sharing within families and communities as a social and well being marker. To be followed…

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