

# Eskimo Anthropologist studies 'Gussuk' culture

by Joseph James

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A few days ago I was reading an Anthropological study of an Alaska Eskimo community, and after I finished it, a terrible realization came to mind; I must be especially stupid because after 40 years of being an Eskimo, I knew less about my culture than that Anthropologist did.

But then I thought about it some more, and reasoned that it may just appear that way, as many things appear to be one thing when they are actually something else.

Since the best way to find out just how much anyone actually knows about a subject is to examine the methods they used to arrive at their answers, I decided to pretend I was an Anthropologist who was studying a strange culture. Being Eskimo, I naturally chose to study "the Gussuk culture," which is certainly strange enough.

Now I understand that Anthropology and Archaeology are "sister" sciences so I suppose the first thing to do would be to find some old Gussuk graves and dig them up for artifacts. In Egypt there are pyramids with mummies in them, but nothing like that near here, so I would have to settle for what's available, but still representative. Maybe Grant's or Lincoln's tomb? Then after I got some artifacts, I would pick a Gussuk community, say Boston, and find a typical Gussuk family to live with and observe close up, like the Gettys, the Rockefellers or the Kennedys. I would also wander around the community, knocking on doors and asking all sorts of questions, like: "Do you use deodorant because: a.) you're

trying to attract bees to pollinate you? b.) your under-arms absorb alcohol and that is how you get drunk? c.) it indicates your social status? d.) because it has religious significance? e.) you're warning off predators? f.) you don't know why? Then after amassing tons of material, I would make a bunch of charts and graphs and put them in a book about the Gussuk culture. I would also include some photographs of the daily activities of typical Gussuks in their community; you know, cute little nude children and bare-breasted women, just like *National Geographic*. Then I would get some famous person(s) to endorse my book so everyone would naturally assume that I was smart and knew what I was talking about.

After all that work, I would know just as much about the Gussuk culture as they know about ours, which is nothing.

Margaet Mead once said that the essence of Anthropological work is comparison. Paul, in the Bible, said that those who measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, are not wise. And anyone who would do all that work to learn nothing, when there are so many easier ways to learn nothing, is not all that wise after all, are they?

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