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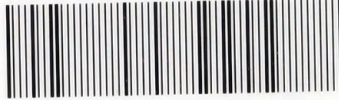
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The girl and the dogs.

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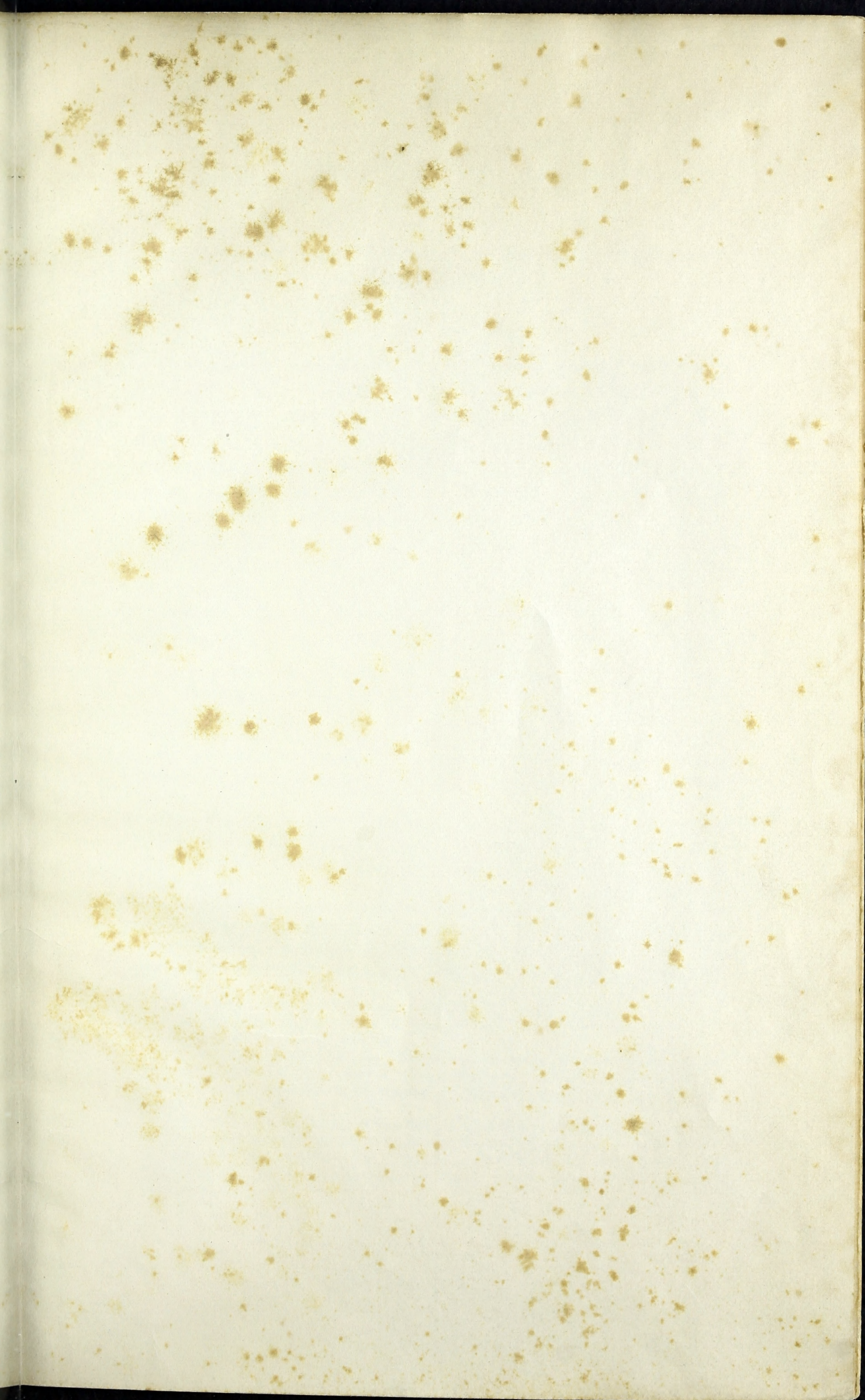
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THE GIRL AND THE DOGS—AN ESKIMO FOLK-TALE
WITH COMMENTS

SIGNE RINK

The folk-tale generally known in west Greenland under the above title¹ is also known on the east coast² as "The Origin of the Qavdlunait and Irqigdlit" (Europeans and Indians). The Eskimo of Cumberland sound³ and elsewhere know it under a similar title, but call the Indians "adlet" or "adlat,"⁴ the latter being the more important from a Greenland point of view, as "atlat" means "the others"—that is, Indians rather than Eskimo. A free translation would therefore be "The origin of Indians and the white men." This can hardly have been the real meaning of the fable in remote antiquity.

The following is a summary of the tale, the details of which are recounted more fully in the works we have cited :

"A man had a daughter with whom he lived alone at the winter hamlet. The girl rejected the advances of every suitor, stating that her father would not allow her to marry;⁵ but a dog once came to the hamlet, by whom the daughter had progeny, ten in number, half of whom had upper parts like men, but limbs and feet like dogs, the other half contrasting with the first ones in that their upper portions were dogs and their legs human.

"Despite this, the girl's father fetched the offspring from the mountain behind the hut and brought them up like ordinary children, employing these monsters, when old enough, in carrying his kajak, clothing, and implements to and from the dwelling and the beach. When, however, it occurred to him that his grandchildren might possibly exhaust all his resources, he turned both them and their parents (the girl and the dog) out on a barren island, but nevertheless permitted the dog to swim to the mainland occasionally and fetch a little food for the family, for which

¹ See Dr Rink's *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, p. 20.

² Capt. Gustav Holm, *Meddelelser om Gronland*, vol. x, p. 290.

³ Franz Boas : *The Central Eskimo*.

⁴ See also in vocabularies as "Alla," having same meaning. Though the Greenlanders incline to the exploding sound of "l" (expressed by "dl"), they occasionally substitute for it "ll," especially in the singing of young girls, who may consider it "fashionable."

⁵ Another version states that it was the girl herself who was unwilling to marry; hence she is occasionally called "Vinigumisuitssoq" (the maid unwilling to marry), and likewise "Neviassiaq," or the "Virgin." Occasionally she is given the name "Taortitssinaq," or the "Sorceress," on account of the way in which she looked after her progeny.

purpose the wife was wont to hang a pair of woman's boots about his neck. Ere long, however, the grandfather was loth to fulfill his new compact, and therefore on one occasion placed stones in the boots together with the food, so that the dog sank and was drowned on the way home. The mother was furious at this, and called on her sons for revenge; whereupon they all swam over and ate up their grandfather; but on returning thereafter she informed them that thenceforth they must support themselves. There and then she placed half of them on a willow leaf, which she pushed towards the land, crying, 'Now, you can sail to the land and become 'irqigdlit' (which, according to the present interpretation of the word, means 'Indians,' but could scarcely have had this signification in the days of the origin of the tradition). The remainder she placed on the sole of an old shoe which she had already charmed, and shoved them out seawards, crying, 'You may go off from shore and become 'qavdlunait' (now understood as 'Europeans,' but which could hardly have had this meaning in the days of the origin of the tale), 'and there,' she is said to have continued, 'you can learn to take care of yourselves and make beads and many pretty little articles.'"

This is the tradition or myth in its present shape. But is this its original form? I think not. I have always had an instinctive feeling that in its present shape it is incongruous and unreasonable, even when in my childhood I heard it related by the natives themselves in Greenland, where I was born and brought up; and when, at mature age, I saw it in print, how inharmonious seemed the commencement of the tale, stamped with barbarisms, and its entirely modern termination! On the one side, there was the coarse fable of the Girl and the Dog; on the other, there was the pretty nick-nacks and the land of the Europeans, which in some versions is mentioned as Denmark.

This caused me to see that the legend must have been garbled in one part or the other. Since this often happens in quite modern narrations, how easily it might occur in the course of centuries! From the change of but one little word, or possibly the omission of one tiny syllable, a false version arises; and since this is the case with individuals, it may also be predicated of nations.¹

A key by which this error may be rectified appears to have been preserved in one of the remotest corners of Eskimo world, namely, Anadyr, in eastern Asia. This is the Eskimo word

¹ As one instance among thousands, it may be mentioned that the name of one of our most popular dances, called by us "Russisk Cavalleri" (Russian cavalry), is but a corruption of the English Roger de Coverley.



“keydlunaq,”¹ which in that district it still applied to the wolf or the wild dog. The reader will at once remark the striking resemblance between the words keydlunaq and qavdlunaq.

This clue gives an efficient and logical construction or significance to the otherwise meaningless legend of the Girl and the Dog, and also throws light upon the literary analysis of the word qavdlunaq, it being not qavdlunait (Europeans), but keydlu-, or possibly qeydlu-nait² (wolves), that the dog-wife condemned her offspring to become. Neither did she make them irqigdlit (Indians), but irqigdlit (men), repulsive men, of short stature, the word irgit being in all its meanings expressive of diminution or, better, of a collection of diminutives, such as, for instance, “gravel” (grains of sand), “nits” (eggs of lice), and, finally, small people (see Asia polygl. Klaproth).³

But Indians are not mannikins or pigmies, and it therefore appears to me that the “irgit” of the story could not at first have been intended to designate Indians. This suggestion does not, however, imply that a certain stock or tribe of Indians at some advanced period may not have been nicknamed “irqigdlit” (probably in the sense of “nits”); nor does it prevent certain Indians from having some dog myth of their own, as do the Chippeways and others.

Considering now that it could hardly have been the main intention of the wild Asiatic dog’s wife to make a more clearly defined or accurate division of her hybrid offspring than that of animals and men, rather than nations, as is now understood, the solution of the question will be found in the mother’s own concluding speech to her offspring, changing it by translating

¹ It is but proper to observe that this word for dog has been met with only with the soft sound of the “l,” as keylelunak; but this form would be cognate with keydlunaq of the more highly cultured eastern tribes.

² Keydlunaq may be formed from “key” or “ki,” to bite (see Asia polygl). This Siberian root is, of course, the stemword of the Greenland kiva (he bites him). The affixes “lu” and “naq” mean respectively “bad” and “to an unusual degree.” This applies well, for a dog gives a bad bite, but a wild dog or wolf a far worse one, an unusually ugly bite. If the word be really formed for that meaning, its first “k” is sounded like an ordinary sharp “k;” but possibly the “k” should be pronounced with a guttural sound. In that case the word might be formed from the verbal stem “qipoq” or its derivative, “qitsatiga” (brutish desire). Both of the affixes “lu” and “naq” can be equally well appended to “kiva” and “qitsatiga.”

³ The root-word irgit was, according to Castrèn, about the middle of the present century still given to some Siberian tribes of low stature. He says: “In Irkutsk I only met the Sajote-people, which for the time being forms but one tribe, the Irgit” (Castrèn’s Journey to Siberia, 1845-’49).

“irqigdlit” by “ugly-looking men” instead of “Indians,” and “qeydlunait” by “wolves” instead of “qavdlunait,” “Europeans;” it will then read thus: “Go ye to the land and be irqigdlit (men), after me, your mother; and ye others, go ye out into wide world (to the wild deserts) and be ye qeydlunait (wolves), after the wolf, your father.”

We can now see clearly how Europeans gained their Eskimo name and whence the false report of their descent from the dog or wolf has been derived. Were it not for the tradition, *Europeans* would never have come to bear their present Eskimo appellation—the corruption of keydlunaq or qeydlunaq into qavdlunaq.¹

It appears to me that this corruption has occurred in the following manner:

The Eskimo wandered—let us say for thousands of years—about and along the shores of the Pacific, of Bering strait, and finally of the Arctic ocean, more and more to the north and eastward, over the ice and rolling billows, as well as over land, always struggling for existence, always meeting with new peoples, but never forgetting their old stories and legends, retaining, *inter alia*, the good old one of the visit of the wolf or dog to the woman of their race (ijiquaug² he was called by some of the tribes, by others azelu³); neither did they forget the banishment of their semi-bestial half-brothers in the shoe-sole boat, or that these exiled brothers had been called qeydlunait (“Be off with ye and be ye qeydlunait,” etc.).

And so, whilst they still roamed about with these memories in their minds, they suddenly one day met with the Europeans for the first time, sailing over the seas; and in what else did the strangers sail but in shoe-sole-like vessels, the European ships, with rounded bows and masts resembling those which the woman of tradition had furnished the shoe-sole boat.

¹ It is most interesting to note that the Anadyr word *keydlunak* in its only solvable form reappears among the tribes of Alaska in several corrupted, yet easily recognizable, varieties, such as kulunak, kauklinak, and even kalunah, and still in the original sense of “wolf” (see W. H. Dall and others). Whether this fact is to be considered as a mere matter of course, a natural consequence of the tribal wanderings of words, or whether we may be allowed to assign a deeper meaning, considering the retention of the otherwise lost primary meaning of the word keylunah, viz., wolf, as a result of some reaction from its secondary one, viz., qavdlunaq, toward which the alloyed forms most remarkably approach, we cannot say.

² See Central Eskimo.

³ *Naturalist*, 1886.

The thoughts of the Eskimo reverted to the tradition of their race. Their qeydlunait had returned again, but in the ennobled guise of true human beings, without the legs or tails of dogs, and the shoe sole had become a fine great ship.

Soon the Eskimos came in closer touch with these interesting strangers, bartered with them and learned to speak to them; and the strangers, too, learned to communicate with the Eskimo and allowed themselves to be called by the name the Eskimo had at once given them on their arrival in the land, namely, "keydlunait;" but it is possible that the strangers did not always pronounce their new name aright, possibly more like qavdlunait, and thus the Eskimo on their part adopted the jargon of the Europeans; so that the sound qavdlunait finally mastered that of keydlunait, which word now appears to be retained solely amongst the Eskimo of the farthest west as a term for wolves.

I cannot be mistaken as to qavdlunait and qeydlunait being one and the same word, and the fact that the word qavdlunait (plural of qavdlunaq) is deeply rooted in the old myth and in its historical renewal through the visit of the Europeans to the country of the Eskimo appears to me to explain the unbroken unity of the appellation throughout the extensive region comprised between east Asia and east Greenland. This implies deep-rooted common recollections from a far distant age.

Where and when the tradition became corrupted we shall leave to separate discussion.

The common constructions or renderings of the word qavdlunaq by others should be noted.

Every student of the Eskimo language is well aware that the usual and apparently reasonable interpretation is that it is derived from the root "qua," or more properly "qauk," which means clearness, but approaching nearest in its meaning to "daylight," or "brightness of day." The word might therefore better be derived from "qaugdloq," the prolongation of qauk, meaning the illumination of objects by the glare or brightness of daylight. In his Greenland dictionary, Samuel Kleinschmidt translates it "pure white."

The third syllable, too—namely, naq—a strong superlative, meaning, as we know, "unusual measure or degree," is in perfect harmony with the previous syllables, and thus we get "having very light skin."

This, it cannot be denied, appears to be a reasonable and logical solution, both from a purely literary and a philological point of view; but Kleinschmidt nevertheless does not attribute the derivation of the word *qavdlunaq* to *qauk* or *qaugdloq*, but gives it as a substantive whose root is "quite lost."

Another explanation that appears far less intelligible is that of the missionary Petitot,¹ who says that in the Mackenzie river dialects *qavdlunaq* is derived from "*qagdlo*," meaning "eyebrow" or "supraorbital arch." He chooses the signification of "eyebrow," and considers the name as indicating the way in which Europeans wear their headgear, so unusual to the Eskimo—that is to say, down to the eyebrows—and consequently translates *qavdlunait* in his language by "*les couronnés*."

Notwithstanding the high authority of M Petitot, I am more inclined to regard the word *qegdlo* or *qavdlo* in the sense of the supraorbital arch, a feature prominent in Europeans, and which may from the very first have been a striking one in the eyes of the flatbrowed Eskimo. But, as the reader is now aware, I have come to an entirely different opinion, namely, that the word *qavdlunaq* lies concealed in the old Eskimo tradition of the dog or *qeydlunaq*.

It would be interesting to procure comprehensive records of the legend from as many of the west American tribes as possible, not to mention those of east Asia. Mr J. Murdoch² gives "*azelu*" as the name of the wolf or wild dog used by the natives of Point Barrow, and assimilates it to the "*ijiquaug*" of Cumberland sound, which means the most powerful and compelling glance. In Greenland dialect "*iji*" should be spelled "*isse*," and as regards "*qaug*," there is no objection to assimilating it with the Greenlandic "*qaoq*," which, for instance, terminates the word "*angi-qaoq*" (he is very great or tall).

The word *azelu* does not at first glance appear to contain the same elements as "*ijiquaug*," but one has only to read the author's flat "a" like the German "*essen*" or the English "*able*," in which case "*aze*" (Point Barrow) will be the same as "*iji*" (Cumberland inlet) and "*isse*" (Greenland). The syllable "*lu*," as in *keydlunaq* (wolf), indicates something bad, the meaning

¹ Petitot, notwithstanding some few obvious errors, has made very valuable contributions to comparative Eskimo linguistics both by his "*phonograph*" and especially by his dictionary on the Mackenzie-Eskimo dialects. *M.*

² *American Naturalist*, July, 1886.

of the whole word azelu being, therefore, the villainous or fearfully conquering eye or glance.

In any case, I believe that we may rest assured that azelu (the villainous compelling eye) and the red and white spotted ijigaug, whose powerful conquering glance was the only thing that could have turned the mind of Vinigumisuitssoq (the maid unwilling to marry) toward a lover, are both personifications of the Asiatic wolf, *i. e.*, keydlunaq or, more properly, qeydlunaq, subsequently corrupted to qavdlunaq and employed as a name for all white men.

