

Transcription of the Rogers' Raid portion of Elvine Obomsawin's original interview recorded by Gordon Day in 1959 (reel 29, side 1) with an introductory note by Marge Bruchac.

This is a copy of Gordon Day's original transcription of the 1959 audio recording of Elvine Obomsawin. The English language version of the story shown here is a literal translation of the Abenaki spoken text. English words are linked together with dashes whenever they match up to a single Abenaki word (for example, *ahaigawa* = "when-we-lived")

While speaking to Day, Elvine Obomsawin used some narrative techniques that are typical of indigenous oral traditions. These include: repetition, references to specific family relations, quoted speech, emphasizing certain words and phrases, code-switching (speaking some words in a different language), notes on the time of day and season, and passing a story from the oldest family member to the youngest. Elvine also recounted these events as though she had personally witnessed and experienced them. In this way, she was faithfully repeating the story in the same way that her aunt, Mali Msadoques, heard from her grandmother, Malian Obomsawin, who experienced the raid as a young girl. These and other techniques allowed Native speakers to keep oral traditions essentially intact over many generations.

The story of *Malian's Song* passed through the memories of only three speakers in 200 years: from Malian Obomsawin, to her granddaughter Mali Msadoques, to her niece Elvine Obomsawin, who recorded it in 1959. Then, in 2002, Elvine's granddaughter Jeanne Brink shared the story with the Vermont Folklife Center.

This on-line version has been edited as follows:

- Elvine Obomsawin's original words are written in italics, and Gordon Day's English translation for those specific words appears underneath each line.
- Each sentence begins with a capital letter, and stands as a separate line, whereas the original text was one continuous narrative.
- The names of known individuals are identified when they appear in the text.
- Some explanatory notes are included in brackets where necessary to make the text clearer.

Rogers Raid by Elvine Obomsawin

Nokemesis --Elvine kalozit.

My-aunt [Mali Msadoques] -- Elvine [Obomsawin] is speaking.

Nokemesis malizek ahaigawa nli nlôdokawgonana odzi Odanak alôwzimek.

With Aunt Malis when-we-lived then she-tells-us about at-Odanak the-way-of-living.

Okemesa ni toodziwi piwesop.

Her grandmother [Malian Obomsawin] at-that-time she-was-little.

Ni alnôbak ni todziwiw tagwôgwiwi pmekhadin.

And the-Indians at-that-time in-the-fall they-are-dancing.

Kizi kikawôgan mziwi máanôzik.

Already harvesting all gathered.

Ali witamoodit iglismôniwi "harvest, harvest festivities" -- fête, odzi aida -- kikawôgan tagôgwiwi -- alnôbai niben.

As as-they-say in-English "harvest, harvest festivities" -- festival [*fête* is "festival" in French], -- for well -- harvesting in-fall -- Indian's summer.

Ni pmekhadin ni ali zawi sipki fête-awimek, pmekhadimek, ni zawi ozawsanô ali oli tkelôgwihlôk, ôdabiidit, naodzi nôdziodamak, ni odôdadbinô -- ni eta -- ni ba pazgo, wskinôskwa -- wski phanem -- nda nita agema obidigawen kedagik pidigaoldiit -- pidigaoldiit e ta -- podawazwigamigok.

And they-danced and so sometimes late festival-celebrating, dancing, and sometimes they-go-out because nice-it-was-cool-evening, they-rested, some go-to-smoke, and they-rested -- er -- and that-one, a-young-girl -- a-young-woman -- not at-once she she-goes-in the-others when-they-go-in -- when-they-go-in er -- to-the-council-house.

[NOTE: The Abenaki oral tradition is not precisely clear about the name of this young girl who was at the Council House that night, and who went outside. Her experience was preserved in Malian's memory, and family traditions suggest that she was closely related to Malian. We used the name Maliazonis, and identified her as Malian Obomsawin's cousin in *Malian's Song*.]

Wadzi mina pmegoodit.

To again they-dance.

Nda na pazgo na wskinôskwa -- wski phanem -- nda agema pidigawi.

Not that one that-one -- the-young-girl -- the-young-woman -- not she went-in.

Odzi olawibekw, ni odain kwadzek -- (ma) -- obaamisipkik ain kwadzek -- ni -- pezgelogwihla, kini pezgelogwihla -- ni kizôzit wadzi pitigat môdzapmekhadimek alômigoma, kizôzit wadzi pitigat, ni adodzi awanii tsannegot.

Because it-is-calm, and she-stays-outside she-more-late stays outside -- and -- it-is-dark, very it-is-dark -- and when-she-was-ready to go-in at-the-start-of-the-dancing inside-the-house, when-she-was-ready to go-in, then someone he-stopped-her.

Nda amotska onamiowi ni awanii, ni kanewa odzanego.

Not even she-not-see-him that someone, but he-stopped-her.

Idam, akwi sagezi. (Kowawtamenô ato alnôbaiwi.)

He said, don't be afraid. (You understand probably, in-Indian.)

[NOTE: at this point in the recording, Elvine began speaking in English instead of Abenaki, apparently so that she could be sure that Gordon Day understood the exact meaning of Samadagwis's warning. Since many Mohican people were already fluent English speakers at that time, it is possible that Samadagwis's original warning was given in both Abenaki and English. Family tradition suggests that Samadagwis did not speak the Abenaki language very well, and Elvine's story suggests that he used the word "magwak" to describe the raiding party. Although Gordon Day translated this word as "Iroquois," it colloquially translates to "man-eater," and could indicate any powerful enemy. Perhaps Samadagwis avoided identifying Robert Rogers by name, since the white men had hired him as a scout, and he did not want to be marked as a traitor if his warning was discovered. A few words that Day omitted from his original transcription of this section are included here, in brackets.]

Friend.

[I am a friend.]

Fear not.

I have a message to give you.

I have a message for you.

In a nearby (woods) there are a group of enemies that is ready [to take your,] to invade your town, [and] kill everyone, and just capture your town.

They are numerous.

So I have come to give you the message.

I am a friend.

[So then she went in.]

Nda nia -- aida -- kwidobawo nia -- ni nigik alnobak -- magwak pilewakak -- odaino yo kpiwsi.

Not I -- well -- I-am-your-friend -- and those Indians -- Iroquois strangers [Rogers' Rangers] -- they-are-here in-the-little-woods [the Abenaki village site 2 1/2 miles upriver].

Alemi môdziidit alemi wigwômwôk, mziwi môdzoldimek ni alemi tebakak nidzi mziwi ogadi nhlônô, ozanôbamewô, ni odzikseminô kedodanawô, ni nebaiiôn nia wadzi wawôdokwlan.

When they-leave [the Abenaki people at the Council House]for-their-home, all leaving and during-the-night then-will all [Rogers' men will attack them all]they-will kill-them, their-husbands, and they-burn-it your-village, and I-come I for warning-you.

Ni gaaiia ni na oskip phanem obidigan podawazwigamigok adalgadimek.
And surely that young woman she-went-in to-the-council-house the-dancing-place.

Ni wawôdakawôn kedagil widzialnôbak kagwesa agema ahlômek.
And she-warned the-other-Indians what he told.

Ni wawôdokawôn kagwesa wawôdokawômek.
And she warned what she-had-been-warned.

Ni naodzi nda olômawalmoônôp ozômi ali awôsizwit -- ali awôsis
And some not they-not-believed her because she-was-young --because a-child.

Naodzi ganewa nita odakwkaldino, ni wigwôgôk omôdzinô tebinawônô adawôsozmôwô.
Some however immediately they-stopped-dancing, and to-home they-went to-see-about their-children.

Ni wlôdzino wadzi polwaadit.
And they-got-ready to run-away.

Ni naodzi nda odebestawôôno nii oski nôkskwa – wski phanem...
And some-of-them not they-listen-to that young girl -- the-young-woman...

[NOTE: In the middle of this sentence, Elvine shifted from talking about the 1759 raid to identifying the source of this story. Mali Msadoques, who raised Elvine after her sister (Elvine's mother) died, is the woman who told Elvine this story.]

ni nokemesis, nada môdzakwnegwak -- nemaasa niona wanielôbenop nigawosena, ni agema nodônagonana

and my-aunt [Mali Msadoques], that-one she-that-raised-us -- early we-lost-her our-mother [Elvine's mother], and she [Mali Msadoques] took-us-to-care-for.

Na ni alôdokaogowak, agema okemesa – okemwsa todziwi – nokemesis pab miwi ntodziwi pasodawiwi ngwedôs kasinska kasigademap.

She [Mali Msadoques] the-one she-that-tells-us, her grandmother [Malian Obomsawin] -- her-grandmother -- at-that-time -- my-aunt about at-that-time about 60 times years-old-was.

[NOTE: In other words, Mali Msadoques was about 60 years old when she first told Elvine this story. In oral traditions, these and other details about the relationships between the person who experienced the event and those who retold it later are crucial parts of the story.]

Ni aieta ni na agema okemesa awôsizeop ni aodimek ni adodzi nita odzi omôdzino alnôbak wigwômwôk.

And, well, and this-one, her-grandmother [Malian Obomsawin], she-was-young, at-the-time-of-the-fight and some at-once from there [the Council House] they-left the-Indians for-home.

Niga akwgaadin ni omôdzino wigwômwôk.

And they-stopped-dancing and they-went to-home.

Ni onôdzi tebinawônô odawôsizmowô wadzi polwaadit akwôbi nabiwi wadzi kizi kôtliziidit.

And they-went-to-see-about their-children their people in-order-to they-run-away as-soon-as-possible so could they-hide.

Ni nokemesis, nada alôdokagowak, onkawôdokaogowak agema okemesa ni todziwi ni eta -- omahoma wa nokemesis omaanô mziwi.

And my-aunt the-one she-that-told-us, she-who-passed-it-on-to-us, her grandmother at-that-time er -- her-[great] grandfather [Simôn Obomsawin] this-our-aunt's [relative] he-gathered-them all.

Pezgiwi, pakalmegwat, pezgiwi.

In-the-dark, of-course, in-the-dark.

Nda awani tsakwsek psakwelanigan.

No one a-light kindled.

Ni omaanônô ndaawôsizemôwô pezgiwi pakalmegwat.

And they-gathered-them their-children in-the-dark "you-bet".

Ni omôdzinô nieta -- wadzi kôtlôôdit tômô adali -- adali ndaaba -- aita -- mskawômokw.

And they-left er -- in-order-to they-hide somewhere there -- where not-could -- well -- find-them.

Pakalmegwat olôgwoo ni todziwi ni ogôtlezinô -- eta -- ktsi psakaiganek adali wadzi kaba nda mskawômokw, ni eta nada sanôba, ktsai, adodzi agimoodit odawôsizmôwô adali molôgek ni -- ni odagimônô odawôsizmôwô tôni li mziwi odainô.

Of-course it-was-night and at-that-time and they-hid [about 170 Abenaki people] -- well -- big in-a-ravine [Sibosek] where so-that they-could not find-them, and er that-one the-man, the-old-man [Simôn Obomsawin], when they-counted their-children there it-is-deep there -- and they-counted-them their-children whether there all they-were.

Ni pazgo odzi nodahlôn.

And one of (them) [the children] is-left [behind].

Nokemesis na okemesa na nodahlôt.

My-aunt [Mali Msadoques] this-one her-grandmother [Malian Obomsawin] this-one she-is-left.

Ni agema nda wawaldamowô ali nvnegwetsi nidep -- wigwômwôk nônegwitsiwi.
And she not she-not-knows that alone she-lived (?) [was] -- in-the-house alone.

Ni kanewa kizi ga tokop.
But already she-was-awake.

*Ni odabin alzidasinemekw abonek ni odzizawôbin tawzôganek -- tawszôganek wamekitaki
ôba[dasin] -- eta abokwaliwi, ôtalinto -- ôtalikôkanilinto.*
And she-was-sitting at-the-front on-the-bed and she-was-looking-out the-window -- on-the-
window sill leaning -- [and] she-was-sitting-near, she-was-singing -- she-was-calmly-singing.

Nda amotska wawaldamôwen ali kedagik kizi môdziidit.
Not even she-not-knows that the-others already they-were-gone.

*Nita adodzi wiwizô pidigat omitôkwesa pezgiwi wiwizôpidigan ni wednôn -- omeskawôn
ôtalintok wa.*
Suddenly then quickly he-entered [Simon Obômsawin] her-father in-the-dark quickly-entering,
and he-took-her -- he-found-her she-singing this-one.

Nita wednôn ni wiwzômôdzin akwôbi libpegwatok.
Right-away he-took-her and quickly-he-left as-possible as-he-could.

Li psakaiganek -- ktsi psakaiganek.
To the-ravine-at -- the-big ravine-at.

Nida adotak -- aida -- Eli Nolet wigwômek adotak.
That is-where -- er -- Eli Nolet his-house that's-where-is that ravine.

Loaikok, niga aliwitamoodit odanak, koaikok.
At-the-pines, that-is how-they-call-it at-the-village, at-the-pines.

Ni mzi msal (mziwi adali) kôtlizidiidep alnôbak -- wôbanakiak.
And all there they-were-hiding the-Indians -- the-Abenakis.

*Ni nemahom, ktsi Obomsawin, ktsi Simo, adodzi pkagôt sibo -- ni eta -- kwaskwai kizos sôkhillôt
kwaskwai pmôdza namiogwezit kizos spôzewiwi.*
And my-[great]grandfather, the-great Obomsawin, the-great Simôn, then he-crossed the-river --
and er -- just the-sun as-it-rose, just-as it-began it-is-seen the-sun early.

Ni nda odabibaiiôwôn ni maowi naani agômek paiiôt, ni gizi kizos aida gizi kizos namiogwzo.
And not he-soon-enough-came and just-then almost across he-comes, and already the-sun well
already the-sun he-is-seen.

Ni odasolkwôn kakwesa ato eta niga olinamiôn, odasolkwôn psakwlata kakwssa kaki odahim.
And his-hat something probably er that-is well-seen, his-hat shining [the silver brooch]
something truly he-wore.

Ni adali kiptôômek agômek.
And there he-was-shot-down on-the-other-side.

Na ibita.
He (was) the-only-one [killed on that spot].

Ni gedagik pakalmegwat msali, msali nthlôk, kedagik.
And the-others surely many, many they-were-killed, the-others.

Mziwita kassiidit wigwômek (wigwômikok).
All-indeed that-were-with the-houses.

Niga odzeksemenô odanak.
That-was-when they-burned-it the-village [Odanak].

Ni abegwatsi lintoôgan olitonô, “Oziwaldam ododanak.
And so a-song they-made, “It-is-lonesome in-their-village.

Niziwaldam nziwaldam ododanak.
I-am-lonesome I-am-lonesome in-their-village.

Wanakwika ododanak.”
The-trees-are-growing-up in-their-village.”

Ni alnôbak (ni) lintoôgan, nônegôni lintoôgan walitoodit.
And the-Indians that song, a-very-old song they-made.

“Niziwaldam, niziwaldam, anakwika ndodanna.
“I-am-lonesome, I-am-lonesome, trees-are-growing-up in-our-town

Malian pita oziwaldam, nda tômô widôba.”
Malian very she-is-lonesome, not any her-friends (there are).”