

## Stasis and Argument in Ammassalik Duel Songs (*pisit*)

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Duel songs are an argumentative genre developed in the Inuit oral tradition; our study focuses on the Inuit duel songs (*pisit*, sg. *piseq*) of Ammassalik (East Greenland). The *piseq* originates “in cases of open scandal or hostility”; “the offended person had recourse to open persecution before the national court of assize, viz. the juridical drum-singing” (Thalbitzer). The singers play the drum, they can be masked, and they hit their cheekbones while singing. Our corpus come from Paul-Émile Victor's *Ammassalik Songs* [*Chants d'Ammassalik*] (1991), a remarkable testimony of a traditional oral practice that has now disappeared. An example of such a song (that will be classified under §6 below):

“He says that [it] is wrong [...] — that my tripod is skewed — I do not know what to answer! [...] You do not have a kayak — the pretty kayaks of others — you spoil the skin — You spoiled the skin cover.” (99-100)

First, we will describe such a duel as a dialectical practice.

Second, we will focus on the opening stage of the argumentative situation, that is the stasis as it emerges in the pair constituted by the appellant's (the offended) first formulation of the charge and the first reply to that charge by the respondent (the offender). We propose the following typology of the observed stasis situations. The singer:

1. says he ignore the reason for the duel;
2. denies the existence of the alleged fact;
3. acknowledges and minimizes the alleged fact;
4. substitutes a hidden, shameful, motive to the alleged, honorable, motive put forward by the appellant;
5. Rebuts the charge;
6. Accuses the appellant of the same kind of misdoing, and equalizes the burden of proof.

Conclusion: observations about some meta-argumentative elements emerging during this argumentative practice.

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