

III.—*The Eskimo.*

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Although the mythology and traditions of the Greenlanders have been long known, no effort has been made to study thoroughly the ethnology of the Central Eskimo, and our knowledge is confined to the occasional remarks and observations of travellers. It is worth remarking that since 1822, when Parry and Lyon wintered at Iglulik, no trustworthy monograph of the Eskimo has been published. I intend to give, in the following remarks, a sketch of the mythology and traditions of the Central Eskimo. Their legends and myths are so numerous, that it is impossible to treat the subject exhaustively; and I confine myself to describing the religious ideas and the mythology of this people from observations I made during my stay in Baffin Land, in the years 1883 and 1884. There are numerous tribes in Baffin Land and the neighbouring parts of the continent. My collections are from three of these tribes: the Oqomiut, of Cumberland Sound; the Akudnirmiut, of Baffin Bay, and the Agomiut, of Eclipse Sound. These tribal names mean: "the inhabitants of the lee side," "those in the centre" and "those of the weather side." The suffix *-mio*, plur. *-miut*, meaning "inhabitants of —"; *oqo*, "the leese side"; *ago*, "the weather side," and the stem *akut*, "the centre." The same stem is in the name Akuliaq, the place near which one of the Canadian meteorological stations was established. It means "the root of the nose," i.e. between the eyes.

The folklore and religious ideas of these tribes is substantially identical, though slight differences occur. The foundation of their mythology and of their religious belief, is the Sedna legend, the contents of which I shall briefly relate:—Savirqong and his daughter, Sedna, lived in a lonely place. Many youths came to woo Sedna, but she rejected their offers. At last the fulmar succeeded in winning her affection. She followed him into the land of the birds. When he wooed her, he promised her a tent made of beautiful skins and plenty of good food. But, alas! his tent was made of ragged fish skins, no blubber for the lamps was in the house, and fish was the only food he offered. Then she repented that she had followed him. Once her father came to visit his daughter; and when he saw how she was being abused by the fulmar, he took her in his boat and returned home, while the fulmar was out fishing. But the bird seeing that his wife had fled, pursued her with his companions. They made a heavy gale, and the small craft was almost upset. The father, to save his life, cast Sedna into the sea. She clung to the boat. He cut off the tops of her fingers. On falling into the sea they were transformed into whales; and still she clung to the boat. He cut off the second joint of her fingers. They were transformed into seals; and still she clung to the boat. He cut off the third joint of her fingers, and they became bearded seals. Then he stabbed her in the eyes, killed her, deposited the body on the beach and covered it with a dog-skin. The flood tide covered it.

Another form of the tradition ends in the following way :—After her fingers are cut off, the storm subsides, the father allows her to reënter the boat and takes her home. But to revenge herself, she orders her dogs to gnaw off her father's feet. Then both descend to the country Adlivun, which is down below, and since then Sedna is mistress of the lower world. Sedna is the supreme deity of the Eskimo : to her all the numerous regulations refer. Men who obey her commands are successful : those who disobey her are unsuccessful, and are visited by sickness and bad luck in all their undertakings. After death they must go to Sedna's abode. Sedna's father grasps the dying with his crippled hand and takes them with him. Two huge dogs watch the door of Sedna's dismal abode, and move only a little to let the dead pass. One year they must stay in this hut ; then they leave it again to live in Adlivun, where they hunt whale and walrus. Those, however, who have obeyed Sedna's command, and all who die by violence, or by drowning, and women dying in child-bed, go to heaven, which is called "Qudlivun." There is no ice and snow. Herds of deer roam on the hills and are easily obtained.

The Central Eskimo believe that, while the soul of the deceased dwells in Sedna's house, it is a malevolent spirit which is called "Tupilaq." To see the Tupilaq is a foreboding of bad luck, his touch means immediate death. This belief is not found in Greenland. The Tupilaq of the Greenlanders is a malevolent being which sorcerers build up of bones and skins to destroy their enemies. It can take the form of any animal, and attack his master's enemies in this shape.

Besides the tradition of the origin of the sea-animals, there is another referring to Sedna :—During a famine she created deer and walrus, by taking a slice of fat out of her belly and carrying one piece to the mountains and throwing the other into the sea. After she had thus created the deer, it turned upon her, frightened her, and did not obey her command to run away, until she had knocked out his front teeth. But since that time Sedna hates the deer.

These two traditions explain numerous regulations referring to the diet and mode of life of the Eskimo. The sea animals, which originated from parts of Sedna's body, constitute the staple food of the Eskimo. The death of every one of these must be atoned for by abstaining from work for a number of days. Sedna hates the reindeer ; therefore, deer and sea animals must not be brought in contact. Deer must not be eaten on the same day with sea animals. Walrus must not be hunted before the deer-skin clothing has been finished. I cannot enumerate the numerous regulations which have a deep influence on the life of the Eskimo, and most of which refer to the Sedna myth.

Every fall, large feasts are celebrated, which are connected with these traditions. In the fall, when heavy gales are raging, the Eskimo believe that Sedna dwells among them, and the mightiest *angakoq* (priest) is charged with driving her away. In this ceremony the art of these men is displayed to its fullest extent, some of their tricks being real jugglery. A line of seal skin is rolled up on the floor of the hut, a small hole being left in the centre. The *angakoq* watches it, holding the sealing spear in his left hand. Another priest is sitting in the rear of the hut, singing and chanting to attract Sedna. Now she is heard approaching under the floor of the hut. When she reaches the hole, the harpooner strikes her and pays out the line. A severe struggle ensues and Sedna flies to her country, Adlivun. This performance is done very cleverly. The harpoon is covered with blood

when it is drawn out of the hole, and one really hears the breathing of Sedna under the floor of the hut. Tricks of this kind are frequently performed by the *angakut* (priests).

On the following day a great festival is celebrated, the most remarkable feature of which is the appearance of masked men who represent spirits. The occurrence of masks in Arctic America was known only from Alaska, and it was considered probable, that they originated through influence of the neighbouring Indians. Reports of whalers, with whom I conferred about the matter, shew that west of Hudson Bay masks are also in use, but in Greenland no mention is made of them.

A comparison of these legends with those of the Greenlanders, is of considerable interest. We find a tradition similar to the Sedna tradition, but not nearly so important. It is the myth of Arnaquagsaq, i.e. the old woman. She lives at the bottom of the sea, where her hut is. There she watches her lamps, from which oil drips that is transformed into whales and seals. Sometimes she is pursued by a demon, hindering her from attending to the lamp. Then famine visits the natives, and a sorcerer must go to expel the evil spirit. The principal figure of the mythology of the Greenlanders is Tornarssuk, the great *tornaq* (spirit) who teaches the sorcerers their art, and may be considered the supreme deity of the Greenlanders. This being is unknown among the central Eskimo, and numerous spirits, the *tornait*, take his place. Every object has its *inua*, or its owner, who may become the genius of man. When a man has acquired such an *inua* for his *tornaq*, he becomes an *angakoq*, a priest. He is enabled to have intercourse with spirits, to visit Sedna and the stars. He cures sickness, and interprets to men the commands of the spirits.

Important figures in the mythology of the Central Eskimo are the moon and the thunder. The man in the moon is considered the protector of orphans, and descends from heaven to assist them against their abusers. The moon is his house, which is covered with white deer skins. In his storehouses roam enormous herds of deer and seals, and in a small annex to his hut lives the sun. His wife's name is Ululiernang. She has no backbone, and no entrails, except lungs and heart, and is considered a malevolent being. The derivation of the name is doubtful, and I cannot explain the meaning of this being.

There is another tradition of the moon, which is well known from Alaska to Greenland. The moon is the brother of the sun, whom in the legend, he pursued. She fled from him, and both were lifted into the heavens, where they continue their course.

Thunder and lightning are made by three sisters, Kadlu, who live far inland. They make the thunder by rubbing skins. It is interesting that the Eskimo offer them dried seal-skins, for this is almost the only instance of a real offering among the Eskimo.

I do not intend to enter into the details of these traditions, but will show by some instances, that their study may enable us to trace the migrations of the Eskimo.

The tradition of the origin of the Europeans is known in Greenland, Baffin Land, and Labrador. The substance of the story is as follows :—A woman married a red dog, by whom she had ten children, five of whom were dogs, and five monstrous beings, the upper part of their body being human, the lower canine. The children were so voracious that their grandfather, who had to feed the whole family, could not kill as many seals as were required. Therefore he drowned the old dog, after having sent his family to a small island. The daughter, to avenge herself, ordered the young dogs to gnaw off their grandfather's feet. Then she made a boat from the sole of her boot, and sent the young dogs

across the ocean, where they became the ancestors of the whites. The five others she sent inland, where they became the ancestors of the Adlat or Erqigdlit. The resemblance of part of this tradition to the Sedna myth is striking, and several other facts make it probable that both are closely connected. The name of the old man and that of Sedna's father is the same, Savirqong, that is "the one with the knife:" and the name of the daughter and Sedna's second name are also identical, Uinigumissuitung, or "she who would not take a husband." But what is more remarkable, in Labrador and Iglulik, Adla, the name of these monsters, means "Indian." This meaning is forgotten on both coasts of Davis Strait. It is evident, however, that an historical foundation for this legend exists on the American continent, which was forgotten by the tribes who travelled north and east.

The historical basis of the following tradition is still more evident. The Eskimo of Baffin Land and Greenland tell of the Tornit. In Greenland, they are a fabulous tribe of inlanders, of supernatural size and strength. In Baffin Land, they are an ancient Eskimo tribe differing from the present inhabitants in dialect and customs. In early times they lived with the Eskimo, but left the country on account of a quarrel. They cut off the tails of their jumpers, and changed their head-dress, that the Eskimo might not recognise them if they should meet again. The same tradition says that they did not use bows and arrows, and did not know how to build kayaks. Their peculiar customs are the subject of many a tale.

It is an important and interesting problem to account for the similarity and dissimilarity of the traditions and language of the Eskimo, of different parts of the Arctic coast. The tradition of the origin of the whites is one of the most interesting. The Eskimo cannot have become acquainted with the whites until about eight hundred years ago. Yet the name for the white man is the same in the dialects of the Eskimo language from Greenland to the Mackenzie. This is the more remarkable, as the root of the word Qadlunaq, probably meaning "something strange," is a very rare one. How is it that all these tribes use the same word for "the white man"? We can understand its general use on the continent and the islands, as continuous intercourse exists between the tribes. But it seems that communication between the Greenlanders and Central Eskimo was cut off hundreds of years ago. Anybody, unacquainted with the character of the Eskimo, might attribute a comparatively recent origin to the tradition. But it must be borne in mind, that events which happened more than three hundred years since, as the remarkable expedition of Frobisher to Frobisher Bay, is still told in a correct form, without any additions. Besides this, the traditional form in which the legend is told, is word for word, identical in Greenland and Baffin Land. The woman sings:—*Angnaujaja, Taunungaima tikikusilima saipaqomik panginierlapuse, Angnaujaja*, or "when you have arrived, you will make many nice little things." There is not a word on the white man in the original form of the tradition, as it is handed down in a song, but it is generally understood, that these "nice little things" are the whites. I do not doubt that the Eskimo, when immigrating into Greenland, were in possession of the tradition, and that it was later on applied to the whites. Whether this was done independently on both sides of Davis Strait is difficult to decide. But I am in favor of the theory that a connection between Greenlanders and the Smith Sound tribes existed later than we are inclined to think. We do not know at all how far the North Greenlanders extend their migrations in Melville Bay; and it is

from this point of view, which is of the greatest importance for the ethnology of Arctic America, that an early exploration of this region is very desirable. The study of the new words of the Eskimo language is, also, an important one from this point of view. The Eskimo do not incline to adopt foreign words, but use for coffee, powder, gun, etc., descriptive words of their own language. Some of these are identical in areas widely apart, and show that it is not impossible that the same word should be invented for the same thing in two regions independent of each other. However, I will not dwell on these details. A thorough study of the language and of the traditions is what is required to solve the ethnological problems of this region.

From the facts already known we arrive at the conclusion, that the more ancient forms of customs and traditions are found west of Baffin Bay. In this way we are led to conclude further that the Eskimo migrated by way of Baffin Land to Greenland and Labrador. The natives of Labrador and the south coast of Baffin Land, believe that the events told in their traditions occurred in the far north. Those of Fury and Hecla Strait point south and south-west to the American continent. The Western Eskimo refer to the east as the place where their heroes performed their exploits. Therefore, it seems probable that the lake region west of Hudson Bay was the home of the Eskimo. We find their remains in the most northern parts of the Smith Sound region. At the present time, the East Greenlanders and the West Greenlanders are very different from each other. Therefore the probability is that the immigrants separated in Smith Sound, and that one part went south while the other turned north-east, and thus reached the east coast.

A decision on these questions must be postponed until the ethnology of the Eskimo is more thoroughly studied. Smith Sound, Chesterfield Inlet, Mackenzie River and Alaska, are the points where researches are most urgently needed. We hope that the work will be undertaken ere long, else the ethnologist will be too late, and the tribes who are dying out rapidly will have disappeared.