

Eskimo Tales and Songs

by H. Rink and F. Boas (1858-1942)

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ESKIMO TALES AND SONGS.

DURING his explorations in Baffin Land, F. Boas collected a considerable number of songs, fables, and tales of the Eskimo inhabiting that region, a few of which are of recent origin, while by far the greater number have been handed down from generation to generation. As the proper translation of these texts requires a most thorough knowledge of the Eskimo language, H. Rink, the other writer of the present paper, undertook this task, F. Boas furnishing notes only on points of dialectic difference between the Greenlandic and the language of these songs. The following translations, the first excepted, and the linguistic notes are due to H. Rink, the explanations of the songs to F. Boas.

The translation of such texts offers peculiar difficulties. To be properly understood, the tales must be heard as told by the story-teller in the snow-house; the surroundings greatly enhancing their charm and facilitating comprehension. The contents of the tale have been often talked about. Now the lamps are made to burn low; the story-teller strips off his outer jacket and retires to the rear part of the hut, facing the wall. He pulls his hood over his head, puts on his mittens, and begins in a low chant, first singing slowly, then with increasing rapidity, in a monotonous recitative, until he comes to one of the songs, which are frequently interspersed between the tales. These are still more difficult to render, the words being often rather trifling, the sentences abrupt, and the author presuming the audience to be familiar with the whole subject of the song, and able to guess the greater part of it. According as euphony and cadence require, the words are sometimes abbreviated almost to interjections, sometimes lengthened by rare or obsolete affixes, the meaning of which is not understood by the present generation, while occasionally words of the peculiar Angakok speech and of magic spells are interspersed. If these difficulties have been met with in Greenland, they are much more conspicuous in texts written in little known dialects. To a literal translation of the following songs explanatory remarks on some of the most striking differences of the Greenlandic have been added, to illustrate the relation of the Baffin Land dialect to those of Greenland (Gr.) and Labrador (L.). Kleinschmidt's alphabet has been used, with the exception of q, which is used instead of his κ, and χ, which is used for ch in Scottish loch.

The following tradition was obtained from an old Eskimo, Pakaq by name, in Cumberland Sound. The text, given below, is sung in a low recitative by the story teller. The song itself is undoubtedly of considerable antiquity, particularly the conclusion, which is told almost with the same words by the Eskimo of Greenland.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ADLET AND OF THE WHITE MEN.

Uinigumissuitoq She who did not want to have a husband	qingmiminik a dog	uinginerlipa. she takes for her husband.	Qingmingagoq With the dog, it is said		
silamut outside	unuang at night	tutigluk both under the same cover	nanidjuk. they are found.	Irdnivoq She gives birth	qucllinik, to ten,
aipunga the one	qingmit, dogs,	aipunga the others	Adlet. Adlet.	Angijudlirput. They begin to grow up.	Itungat Their grand- father
tikitaranget every time he comes to them	netirtlunē when he had got a seal	usidlune when he had loaded it	qayangenut, upon the kayak,	irdnutangit his grandchildren	
alupararterpugmeta, as they ate much and frequently,	piqbijiliranigit giving them a place of abode for the future	qeqertomut to an island	aqpēit he carries them	paningilo the daughter and	
tangmarmik. all.	Angutat Their father	qingmiq the dog	puimiktlune swimming again to him	neqejuqpurpoq he fetches meat	
kaminik. in the boots.	Qingminigoq The dog, it is said	ujimijartlune hanging them around his neck	neqessomirmegoq as he had had meat, it is said	ujarqamigō with stones	
iludlirtogik when he had filled both of them	kivivung. he sinks.	Kivingmigoq When he was drowned, it is said	ituata their grand- father	tujurpeit. they send them(?)	Itungagoq His grandfather, it is said
angiqarpoq ; he goes home ;	atedlo and more	sudle still	tujurpeit. they send them.	Arnargoq The woman, it is said	oqapuro : says :
Itirtse Your grand- father	qaijenga his kayak	alupirsilugo, awaiting,	itirtse your grand- father	pasiuq. you shall attack.	Toqovoq. He is dead.
Irdnuteitagog His grandsons, it is said	ujarpat. she searches for them.	Aitungagmioq Making a sole for herself	umiartatlitovik provided quickly with a new boat		
audlaqovait she orders them to travel	ikirmut : into the open sea :				
Angnaijaja. Angnaijaja.	Taununga ima Down there	tikikusilima when you will have arrived	saipaqomik little things		
panginierlarpuse. you will make.	Angnaija. Angnaija.				

The following is a translation of this song : —

Uinigumissuitoq married a dog. One night she was found outside the hut sleeping with the dog. She gave birth to ten children, one half of them dogs, the other Adlet. The children grew up. Every time their grandfather had got a seal, he loaded it upon his kayak and carried it to them. His grandchildren were very voracious. Therefore he selected an island for their place of abode and carried them over there, his daughter, the dog, and the children. Their father, the dog, swam every day to the old man's hut to fetch meat in a pair of boots which he had hung around his neck. One day the grandfather filled them with stones instead of meat and thus drowned the

dog. When he was drowned their grandfather continued to send them food. The mother, however, said to her children: "Watch your grandfather, when he goes out in his kayak, and attack him!" They killed him. Then she searched for her children, and after having cut a sole for herself, she transformed it quickly into a boat, in which she ordered them to travel across the ocean. She sang: "Angnaijaja. When you will have arrived on the other side, you will make many little things. Angnaija."

Here is a fuller account of the tradition:—

Saviqong (*i. e.*, the knifeman), an old man, lived alone with his daughter. Her name was Niviarsiang (*i. e.*, the girl), but as she did not want to take a husband she was also called Uinigumissuitung (*i. e.*, she who did not want to take a husband). She refused all her suitors, but at last a dog, spotted white and red, whose name was Ijiqang (*i. e.*, the powerful eye), won her affection and she married him. They had ten children, five of whom were Adlet and five dogs. The legs of the Adlet were like those of dogs, and hairy all over, the soles excepted, while the upper part of their bodies was human. When the children grew up they became very voracious, and as the dog Ijiqang did not go hunting at all, but let his father-in-law provide for the whole family, Saviqong found great difficulty in feeding them. Moreover, the children were very clamorous and noisy; so at last their grandfather, being tired of their manifold demands and the trouble they gave him, put the whole family into his boat and carried them to a small island. He told Ijiqang to come every day and fetch meat.

Niviarsiang hung a pair of boots on his neck and he swam across the narrow channel separating the island from the mainland. But Saviqong, instead of giving him meat, filled the boots with heavy stones which drowned Ijiqang when he attempted to return to the island.

Niviarsiang thought of revenging the death of her husband. She sent the young dogs to her father's hut and let them gnaw off his feet and hands. In return Saviqong, when his daughter happened to be in his boat, threw her overboard, and cut off her fingers when she clung to the gunwale. As they fell into the sea they were transformed into seals and whales. At last he allowed her to climb again into the boat.

As she feared that her father might think of killing or maiming her children, she ordered the Adlet to go inland, where they became the ancestors of a numerous people. She made a boat for the young dogs, setting up two sticks for masts in the sole of one of her boats, and sent the puppies across the ocean. She sang: "Angnaijaja. When you will have arrived on the other side, you will make many little things. Angnaija."

In Greenland and the northern portion of Baffin Land the children, which are called Adlet in our tale, are called Erqigdlit. It is of great interest to notice that the Labrador Eskimo call the Indians of the interior Adlet, while the tribes inhabiting the west coast of Hudson Bay call them Erqigdlit. In Baffin Land and Greenland the historical meaning of the term has totally disappeared, but it denotes a fabulous tribe with dog's legs and a human body. It is difficult to account for the application of these different terms to both Indians and the fabulous beings above referred to.

Rink gives an abstract of the legend, as he heard it in Greenland (Rink, "Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo," p. 471): "A woman who was mated with a dog got ten children. When they had grown larger she ordered them to devour her father, whereupon she divided them into two parties and sent them off from home to seek their subsistence henceforth by themselves. Five of them, who were sent up the country, grew erkileks; and the other five she gave the sole of an old boot, and put it into the sea, when it rapidly expanded and grew a ship, in which they went off, turning into Europeans."

J. Murdoch reports a fragment of the same legend from Point Barrow, Alaska. He says ("American Naturalist," 1886, p. 594): "Long ago, Aselu, a dog, was tied to a stick. He bit the stick (*i. e.*, set himself free) and went into the house where he had intercourse with a woman who gave birth to men and dogs."

It is remarkable that, according to Petitot ("Monographie des Esquimaux Tchiglit," p. 24), the Mackenzie Eskimo should have an altogether different account on this subject. He gives the following tradition: Far west on a large island, the beaver created two men. They came to the bank of a river hunting ptarmigan. They quarrelled about their ptarmigan and separated. One became the ancestor of the Eskimo, the other that of the sea animals, who were the ancestors of the Europeans. The Erqigdlit, according to his report, originated from eggs of lice. It seems to me very probable that this is only a very fragmentary and imperfect portion of the complete story as told by the Mackenzie tribes.

It is a very interesting fact that the Eskimo, from Greenland to the Mackenzie, apply the term qavdlunaq or qablunaq to the whites, with whom they became acquainted comparatively recently, and that they have a legend, evidently of great antiquity, referring to their origin. There are two explanations of this fact that suggest themselves: Either the tradition was not invented until the Eskimo came into contact with the whites, or an old tradition was applied to the whites when they became first known to the Eskimo. I believe the former explanation to be very improbable, as the Eskimo report events that happened about three hundred years ago, as Frobisher's

expedition to Frobisher Bay, without any additions. It is, on the other hand, entirely in accord with known facts, that the report of the advent of the whites coming from beyond the sea should be confounded with an old legend treating of a tribe of this kind, and it is easily understood how such a legend spread from one tribe to the other. It is worth remarking, that the song given above does not refer to the whites expressly, although it is understood that "the little things" the children make are the whites.

The fuller account of the tradition as given above shows a marked resemblance to the Sedna legend, which I have treated at another place (Petermann's "Mittheilungen," 1887, p. 303). Evidently the story of the transformation of her fingers into sea animals is the same in both. Petitot's tale also indicates a certain connection between the legend of the sea animals and of the whites.

It would be of the greatest interest to know the version in which this legend is told in Alaska, as it would probably give a clue to its history, more particularly to the question, how the legend came to be applied to the whites.

We give here the text of the Sedna legend:—

SEDNALO¹ QAXODLULO.¹

SEDNA AND THE FULMAR.

Nautaima	Uinigumissuitoq ? ²	Qajarmut ³	kangenut ⁴	audlirtoq.		
Where then	She who never would marry ?	In a kayak	to the mainland	going off.		
Sikoqa'nganut ⁵	ikurika'. ⁶	Takuvigit	ijika, ⁷	takuvigit ?		
Over the ice	crossed.	Doest thou see	my eyes,	Doest thou see them ?		
ia ha ha ha ha !						
ia ha ha ha ha !						
Tupirmut	itelingmut ⁸	aidniedliranuk ⁹	qietaronivik. ¹⁰	Angutā'		
To a tent	of ragged skins	as he had brought her	crying.	Her father		
angninga	umiarmut	tikitoq.	Paningminik	aitirtoq. ¹¹	Umiarmut	
her elder brother	in a boat	coming.	His daughter	going for.	In the boat	
pāninga	ikivoq.	Uinga ¹²	qaxodluk	qiessivoq.	Qaxodluk	
his daughter	embarked.	Her husband	the fulmar	cried.	The fulmar	
oxapoq :	agartsorutika ¹³	takuleka	taimaitjut	ijingit		
says :	my means for transforming	let me see them	being thus	the eyes		
takudnejukpat.	Tupirmut	angiqatut ¹⁴	qaxodluk	madlilirpoq.		
they see once more (?).	To the tent	going home	the fulmar	followed.		
Anure	agsualuk	kanipoq ;	umiavat ¹⁵	kanipoq.	Panine	
Wind	very strong	was near ;	they were wrecked	nearly.	His daughter	
singipa.	Umiarmut	igdliuktut ¹⁶	umiarmut	ajeqpurpoq. ¹⁷		
he pushed into the sea.	To the boat	on both sides	to the boat	she clings.		
Savingmut	anauva :	aqbirit ¹⁸	puiva. ¹⁹	Atē'dlo	anauva :	ugjuk
With a knife	be struck her :	whales	emerged.	Again	be struck her :	a thongseal
puiva.	Atedlo	anauva :	netiq	puiva.	Tamarme ²⁰	ajeqpurpa :
emerged.	Again	he struck her :	a fiord seal	emerged.	Her whole body	she leaned :

Savingmut	ijingemut	touqpa.	Toqova. ²¹	Nunamut	anguta	niuva.
With a knife	into the eyes	he stabbed her.	He killed her.	On the shore	her father	lifted her.
Qipingnik	tigussiva. ²²	Tininermut	idnatirpa.	Qingmisumik ²³		
A quilt	he took.	On the beach	he laid her down.	With a dog skin		
qipigpoq.	Udlutiva.					
she was covered.	The flood-tide took her.					

Explanations: 1. The affix *-lo* means and. 2. Gr. *uvinighkumajuitsoq*. 3. The ending *-mut*, to, appears to be used here and in several other places instead of *-mik*, or *-kut*, with or by. 4. Perhaps Gr. *kangimut* or *kangermut*, towards the inland or the cape of the mainland. 5. Gr. *sikup qanut*; L. s. *kanganut*. 6. Gr. *ikarpog*. 7. Gr. *issika*. 8. Gr. *itsat*, tent, skins; *-luk*, bad; *itsalungnut*. 9. Gr. *ainiatdlaramiuk*, as he had brought her. 10. Gr. *qivavoq*, L. *kéavok*, he cries. 11. Gr. *átsivoq*, or *aigdlerpoq*, he goes for something; L. *aiklerpok*, *aitorpa*, brings her something. 12. The L. form, *-nga*; Gr. *wvia*. 13. This very doubtful expression reminds of Gr. *agssartorneq*, transformation of shape by magic, a word occurring in legends. Here: the man assuming the shape of bird (?); the ending *-torutika*, my reasons or means for. 14. Gr. *angerdlartut*; L. *angerartut*. 15. Perhaps Gr. *umiát*, their boat; *umiú'put*, they were wrecked. 16. Gr. *igdlugut*. 17. Gr. *ajaperpoq*. 18. L. *arvek*, pl. *arverit*. 19. In songs the endings *-vá*, *-pá*, often take the place of *-voq*, *-pog*, and the singular is frequently used instead of the plural. It may be that this is due to rhythmical reasons. 20. *Verbatim*; he or she entire. 21. Gr. *toquvoq*, he dies; *toqupá*, he kills him. 22. Gr. *tiguvál*, he takes it; *tigusivoq*, he takes (something). 23. L. *kingmisuk*, dog skin.

RAVEN AND GULL.

The following dialogue refers to a tale well known in Greenland ("Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo," No. 108, p. 451, in abstract), where it is stated that an *angakok* and his son visited a house inhabited by ravens and gulls, who regaled them with excrements and twigs. The *angakok* is able to see the birds in human shape. We must imagine the birds sitting in their house, — the bird-cliff, — conversing and looking at the men, who are seen to approach on the ice, coming shoreward, and who finally reach the entrance of the house.

Tulugaq :	Irdni'ng, ¹	irdni'ng,	takojartopá'gin, ²	inuktau'ja
The raven (says):	Son,	son,	doest thou go to see them,	that man
namui'dlirtoq ³	pixalu'jang ⁴	unguata'ne?		
going somewhere	the iceberg	beyond?		
Irdning, irdning,	takojartopagin,	inuktauja	namuidlirtoq	pixalujang
Son,	son,	doest thou go to see,	that man	going somewhere
the iceberg				
miksitime? ⁵				
on this side?				
Irdning, irdning,	takojartopagin	inuktauja	namuidlirtoq	ikerga'kulu ⁶
Son,	son,	doest thou see	that man	going somewhere
the small rock				
senie'ne?				
at the side of?				
Irdning, irdning,	takojartopagin	inuktauja	sigjamilirtung? ⁷	
Son,	son,	doest thou go to see them	that man	reaching the shore?

Irdning, irdning, takojartopagin inuk taki'ka⁸ pamilirtung?
 Son, son, doest thou go to see the man yonder reaching the entrance?

Iteqaro'vin⁹ iserit! Unalipilā'roq!
 If thou hast an anus come in! But take this!

Inung: Ah! piungmangitinga¹⁰ qileksinang sudnalogaq.
 The man (says): Ah! I do not like ? something bad (?)

Tulugaq: Unalipilā'roq!
 The raven (says): But take this!

Inung: Taima, taima! pissuilenga!¹¹
 The man: So it is, so it is! I will not have it!

Nauja: Quti'uq!¹² Quti'uq! Quti'uq!
 The gull: Bring it! Bring it! Bring it!

Tulugaq: Issilarin nutarualung!¹³ Unalipilā'roq!
 The raven: Just step inside, big baby! But take this!

Inung: Taima, taima! pissuilenga!
 The man: So it is, so it is! I will not have it!

Tulugaq: Maunga kangivermigin!¹⁴
 The raven: This way come here further inside!

Nauja: Quti'uq! najatama, aititietaminga pitsiqaming¹⁵
 The gull: Bring it! my sister, go and fetch dried fish

exaluminakdjaming.
 pieces of salmon.

Explanations: 1. Gr. *erneq*. 2. Gr. *takujartorpoq*, he goes to see. 3. L. *namurigarpok*; or from Gr. *nangmagpoq*, carries something on his back. 4. L. *pekkalujak*; Gr. *iluliaq*. 5. L. *miksiptinut*. 6. L. *ikkarak*; -*kuluk*, small. 7. Gr. *sigssamilersoq*, beginning to be on the beach. 8. Gr. *takiga*, yonder (in the south). 9. A very doubtful word: Gr. literally *iteqaruvit*, if thou hast an anus; perhaps *iserqaruvit*, when thou first enters. 10. Gr. *piumangitsunga*. 11. Gr. *pissuiddlunga*. 12. Gr. *qaissuk*. 13. L. *nutarak*, -*aluk*. 14. L. *kangivarpa*, he goes from the entrance further inside towards him. 15. L. *pipse*; Gr. *miuse*, or *niuse*, split and dried fish.

AVIGNAQULULO TERIENIARLO.

THE LEMMING AND THE FOX.

Avignaq: Pissuqā'ng,¹ pissuqadlā! sinirsartuarpin?²
 Lemming: Fox! fox! doest thou always run along the beach?

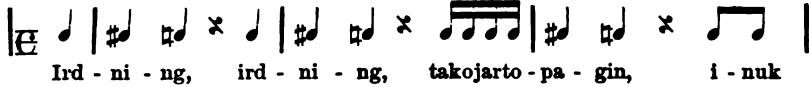
niqegsarsiarpin?³
 Doest thou search for something to eat?

Terieniaq: Suva, niukitu,⁴ timikitung? Kinauna⁵ angmalortung,
 The fox: What will with his short with his bit of a Who is that round thing,
 he legs, body?

niuki-niukitu?
 small leg — small legged one?

Explanations: 1. From the angakok language. 2. L. *senertarpok*, runs along the edge; Gr. -(*t*)uarpoq, continually. 3. Gr. *negigssarsiorpit*. 4. Gr. -*kitsoq*, having a small or scarce. 5. Or *kina una*, that face.

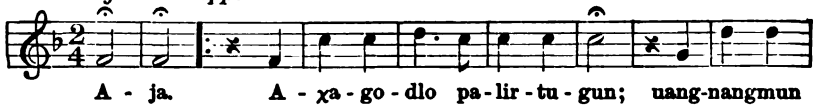
The last two tales or fables are told in a very artistic manner. The first lines of the raven tale are spoken in a marked rhythm, as indicated in the first line, the arsis being about half a tone higher than the thesis. The style of delivery may be indicated thus:—



The words *takojartopa'gin*, and particularly later on *unalipilā'roq*, are pronounced from the depth of the throat, imitating the croaking of the raven. The gull's voice is imitated in the rapidly pronounced screaming: Quti'uq, quti'uq, quti'uq.

While the foregoing tales are undoubtedly ancient, the following songs are modern. The first is said to have been composed about a hundred years ago. The Eskimo of Cumberland Sound are in the habit of visiting every summer a large lake, called Netiling, *i. e.*, with seals. There they find an abundance of deer and salmon, and, as the name suggests, even seals frequent the waters of this lake. The journey is very arduous, occupying many days, and leading up a narrow fiord, in which high tides form dangerous rapids. Farther on a number of difficult portages must be made. The feelings of the Eskimo, when starting on this journey, are described in the following song:—

Adagio non troppo.



Axagodlo palirtugun¹ uangnangmun² tipauvunga³

ija jija aja a.

Atutelirpara mana⁴ pingatirtuangamanga

ija jija aja a.

Sapernarluorqipiva⁵ marqaidlo sarbaidlo

ija jija aja a.

Piitisariomena ajurnarianigimen⁶

ija jija aja a.

Ijerseniartudlika pujeksenik⁷ tamainik.

ija jija aja a.

Takulisagipara pinissuagapiga.⁸

Explanations: 1. Gr. *paorpoq*, pulls the kajak; *-lerpoq*, begins to; *-tugut*, he who. 2. L. *uarngnak*, west wind. 3. Gr. *tagpavunga*. 4. Gr. *artulitdlurparamatna*. 5. Gr. *sapernarpoq*, it is difficult; *-lugpoq*, is badly. 6. Gr. *ajornarpoq*, is difficult; *-ngingmat*, as it was not. 7. Gr. *puissinik*. 8. L. *pinmasuarpoq*, tries to gain something (Gr. *piniarpoq*).

TRANSLATION.

To-morrow we begin pulling towards the northwest, up the country, ija jija aja a. I began finding it very troublesome, when I tried it the first time, ija jija aja a. Awkwardly difficult the overland passages and the rapids, ija jija aja a.

But I got plenty, as it could be done, ija jija aja a.
 ? ? seals of all kinds, ija jija aja a.
 I shall see something I can try to obtain.

THE RETURNING HUNTERS.

Sung by the women who stand looking out for their arrival.

Allegro.

Angu-ti-vun ¹ tai-ma tau - nane tai-ma au - va-si-ma-meta ² ava-va-si
 mametan ³ ne-ri-o-pa-luk tunga - a ⁴, hanga anga hanga anga a - ga - ga.

Explanations: 1. Gr. *angut*, male; *-tivut*, plur. our. 2. Gr. *auvarpoq*, he is hunting reindeer; *-simangmata*, as they have been. 3. *avavavog*, he hunts regularly. 4. *nerivoq*, he eats; *-palugpoq*, he has the appearance of; *-tunga*, I who.

TRANSLATION. — Our husbands thus down there, as they have been hunting reindeer, as they have been regularly engaged in hunting, I shall have plenty of meat now.

H. Rink,
F. Boas.