

KNUD RASMUSSEN - "ACROSS ARCTIC AMERICA"

Grade Level

This lesson plan is designed to be used with students ages 12-15.

Objective

Students will read excerpts from "Across Arctic America," by Knud Rasmussen. In groups, students will be assigned a topic to research in the readings and will choose a method by which to share the information they learn with their fellow students.

Estimated Time Needed

2 class periods.

Materials

Copies of "Across Arctic America," by Knud Rasmussen, pages 100-108 and pages 114-121. Isuma Inuit Studies Reader, Isuma Publishing, Montreal 2004. (included)

Optional: Notes on shamanism (included)

Optional: Igloolik Isuma Productions, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*
<http://www.sila.nu/journal/>

Activity:

1. Ask students if they remember the name Knud Rasmussen from an earlier lesson. Have them share anything they remember and write on the board.
2. Remind them that Knud Rasmussen was a Danish Explorer who traveled approximately 46,000 km (29,000 miles) by dog sled from Greenland to Siberia between 1921 and 1924.
3. Tell students that in 1922 Knud Rasmussen stayed in Igloolik visiting the shaman Aua ("a shaman is a mediator between the human world and the spirit world, between the living and the dead, and between animals and human society." Atanarjuat The Fast Runner, page 39). For more information on shamanism, review accompanying notes with students.
4. Explain that students will be reading excerpts from "Across Arctic America", Knud Rasmussen's account of his stay with Aua and his family.
5. Break students into 5 groups. Explain that each group will be assigned a topic, which they will research in the provided reading. The topics are:

- o Traditional ceremonies - o Duties of women - o Design of snow huts	- o Fears of Inuit - o Most difficult time of year
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6. Have students choose a topic or randomly assign. Groups researching the first three topics will receive copies of pages 100-108. Groups researching the second two topics will receive copies of pages 114-121.
7. Explain that groups can share the information they learn about their topic any way they choose (i.e. poster, chart, drawing, written essay, etc.) Brainstorm possible methods and list on the board.
8. Allow students time to read excerpt, either aloud in groups or independently, and begin working on their topic. Students may need additional time to complete their assignment during the next class period.

Evaluation

Once groups have completed their projects, allow time for sharing and questions. Evaluation of each project should be based on inclusion of key facts of each topic. Information for each topic can be found on the following pages:

- o Traditional customs, pgs. 104-105 (initiation of infant setting out on first journey)
- o Traditional customs, pgs. 106-107 (walrus hunting)
- o Duties of women, pgs. 107-109
- o Design of snow huts, pgs. 102-103, pg. 107
- o Fears, pg. 117
- o Difficult time of year, pgs. 120-121

References

Angilirq, Paul Apak; Cohn, Norman; Saladin d'Anglure, Bernard, Atanarjuat The Fast Runner. Toronto: Coach House Books and Isuma Publishing, 2002.

Robinson, Gillian, Isuma Inuit Studies Reader. Montreal: Isuma Publishing, 2004.

Kessler, Deirdre, Isuma Teacher's Resource Guide, Montreal: Isuma Publishing, 2004.

Isuma Publishing – A Division of Igloolik Isuma Productions: <https://store.isuma.ca/>

TEACHERS' NOTES: SHAMANISM

Before colonization by Europeans, the Inuit lived a life centered on the earth, the animals and the spirit of their ancestors. Shamanism is an element of traditional Inuit spirituality. Shamans, or *angakkuut* in Inuktitut, are men and women viewed as doctors, healers and advisors. These healers were born with and skilled in the ability to see spirits.

In the past, shamans:

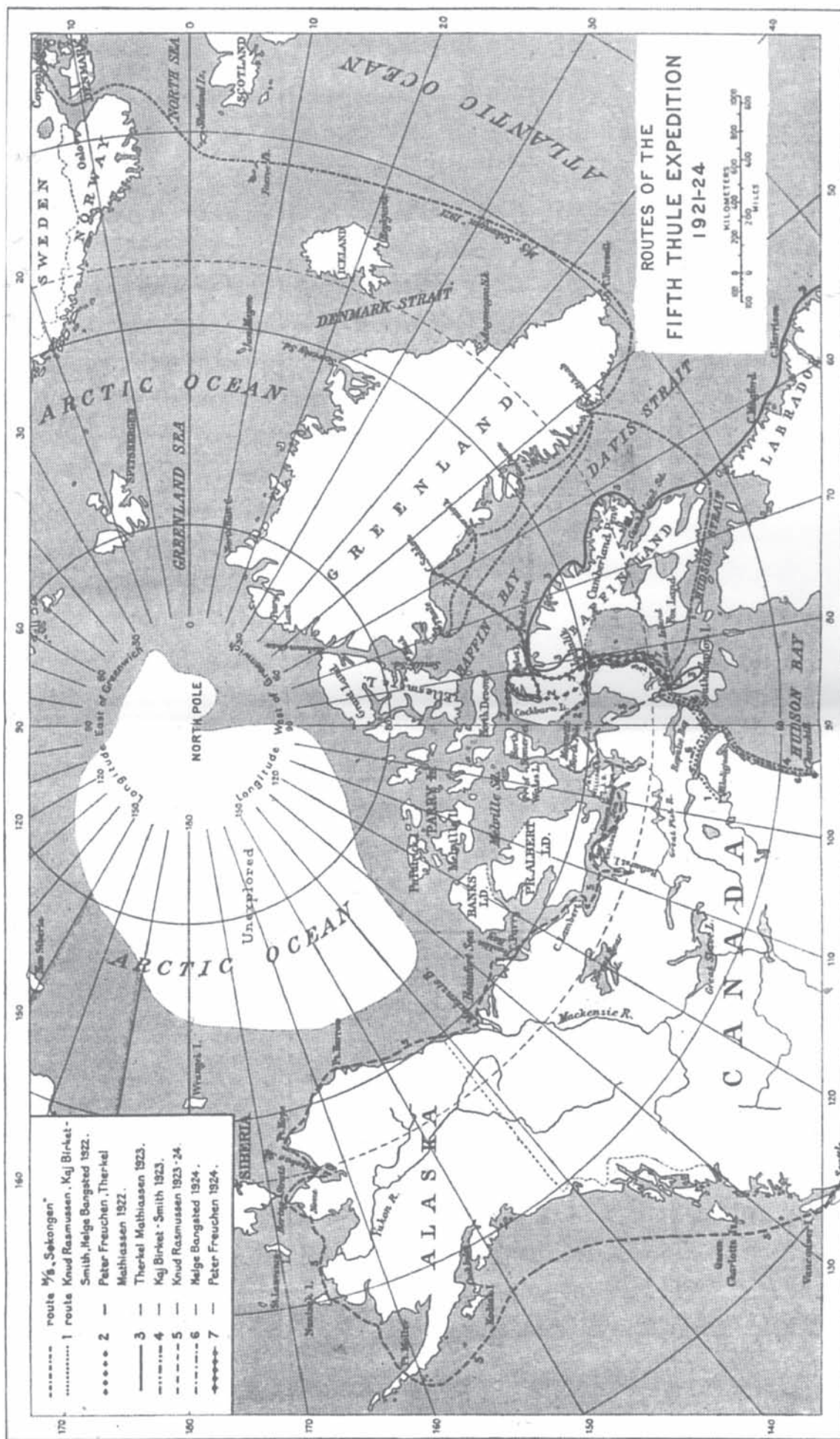
- o Were central figures in ceremonies;
- o Foretold weather patterns and movements of game animals;
- o Cured illnesses;
- o Retrieved lost or stolen souls; and
- o Were assisted by good and bad spirit helpers, known as *tuunngait*, in protecting the health and welfare of their communities.

Angakkuut (Shamans) and Tuunngait (Helping Spirits)

A shaman is a mediator between the human world and the spirit world, between the living and the dead, and between animals and human society. A future shaman must be chosen by a spirit – maybe one of his deceased parents, maybe his namesake, maybe an animal whose skin was used to wipe his newborn body, or maybe any spirit that has appeared to him. This helping spirit (*tuunngait*) would provide the future shaman with assistance and guarantee him success in his practice. Through it, the shaman could ally himself with other spirits. The spirits of the polar bear and the walrus were especially sought after. Their size and their ability to move in water and on land made them powerful mediators.

A shrewd shaman usually had several helping spirits, thus enabling him to move about in the different elements – land, water and air – and also travel backward or forward in time, to visit the dead and the great nature spirits, and to enter the hereafter in the heavens or under the sea.

Each species of animal and each element of nature – the heavenly bodies, the winds, the rivers and streams – was governed by a spirit master (*inua*) who not only had a human form but could also feel emotions and be willing to act. These were the spirit masters who chose to become shaman's helpers.



ACROSS ARCTIC AMERICA

Knud Rasmussen

Between 1921 and 1924, Knud Rasmussen with six other members of the expedition led an epic journey of investigation across the top of the North America from Greenland to Siberia. In three and a half years he and his companions travelled 20,000 miles by dog sled, collected

20,000 artifacts and compiled thousands of pages of information about Inuit culture and history. This epic journey is known as the Fifth Thule Expedition and was the most comprehensive ethnographic investigation of the Inuit from the Atlantic Ocean to the Chukchi Sea in Alaska. Knud Rasmussen over-wintered with other members of the expedition nearby Igloodik on Danish Island. The following excerpts are from The Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos and Across Arctic America. (With thanks to Terence Cole's 'Introduction' to Across Arctic America.)

I was to study the inland Eskimos, with special reference to the spiritual side of their culture. The Eskimo members of the party were divided among the several sub-expeditions as needed, and two of them would remain on guard at the headquarters camp.

We had a pretty good supply of pemmican, both for ourselves and for the dogs, as well as canned goods, which would form the basis of our provisions. We had to supplement it, however, with fresh meat. We were told that Cape Elizabeth, toward the north, was a good spot for walrus at this time of year, and I therefore went off with Mireq and two of the local natives to try our luck. We set out on the 11th of January. Despite some difficulty, owing to snow, which drifted thickly at times, we had some exciting caribou hunting on the ice during the first two days. The thermometer stood at about minus 50°C. (–63° F.) and every time we picked up our guns with the naked hand the cold steel took the skin off.

We purchased some stores of meat at Lyon Inlet, and devoted a few days to fetching these, after which we set out again to the Northward to find the village. None of us knew exactly where it was, as the natives had not yet moved down to the coast, but were encamped some way inland where they had been engaged on their autumn caribou hunting.

The 27th of January was fine, but cold; it was bright starlight towards the close of the journey, but we had had a long and tiring day, and wished for nothing better than to find shelter without having to build it ourselves.

Suddenly out of the darkness ahead shot a long sledge with the wildest team I have ever seen. Fifteen white dogs racing down at full speed, with six men on the sledge. They came down on us at such a pace that we felt the wind of them as they drew alongside. A little man with a large beard, completely covered with ice, leapt out and came towards me, holding out his hand white man's fashion. Then halting, he pointed inland to some snow huts. His keen eyes were alight with vitality as he uttered the ringing greeting: "Qujangnamik" (thanks to the coming guests).

This was Aua, the angakoq.

Observing that my dogs were tired after their day's run, he invited me to change over to his sledge, and quietly, but with authority, told off one of the young men in his party to attend to mine. Aua's dogs gave tongue violently, eager to be off again and get home to their meal; and soon we were racing away towards the village. A brief dash at breakneck speed, and we arrived at the verge of a big lake, where snow huts with gut windows sent out a warm glow of welcome.

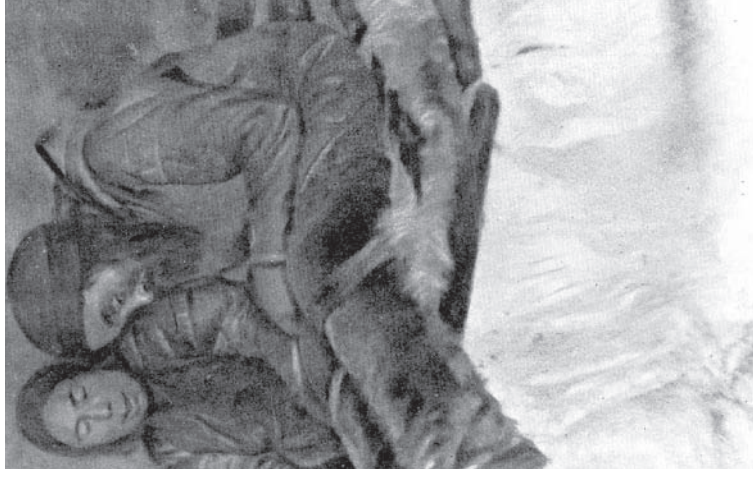
The women came out to greet us, and Aua's wife, Orulo, led me into the house. It was, indeed, a group of houses, cleverly built together, a

real piece of architecture in snow, such as I had never yet seen. Five huts, boldly arched, joined in a long passage—with numerous storehouses built out separately, minor passages uniting one chamber with another, so that one could go all over the place without exposure to the weather. The various huts thus united served to house sixteen people in all. Orulo took me from one to another, introducing the occupants. They had been living here for some time now, and the heat had thawed the inner surface of the walls, forming icicles that hung down gleaming in the soft light of the blubber lamp. It looked more like a cave of stalactites than an ordinary snow hut, and would have looked chilly but for the masses of thick, heavy caribou skin spread about.

Through these winding passages, all lit with tiny blubber lamps, we went from room to room, shaking hands with one after another of the whole large family. There was Aua's eldest son Nataq, with his wife, and the youngest son Ijarak who lived with his fifteen-year-old sweetheart; there was Aua's aged sister Natseq with her son, son-in-law and a flock of children; and finally, out in the farthest end of the main passage, the genial Kuvdlo with his wife and a newborn infant.

It was the first time I had visited so large a household, and I was much impressed by the patriarchal aspect of the whole. Aua was unquestioned master in his own house, ordering the comings and goings and doings of all but he and his wife addressed each other and the rest with the greatest kindness, and not a little fun; an atmosphere of genial good humor was evident throughout.

Hot tea, in unlimited quantity, was welcome after our long hours in the cold, and this being followed by a large, fat freshly cooked hare, it was not long before appetite gave way to ease, and we settled ourselves



Aua and Orulo

comfortably among the soft and pleasant smelling caribou skins.

We explained that we had come down to hunt walrus, and the news was greeted with acclamation by our host and his party. They had been thinking of doing the same themselves, and it was now suggested that the whole village should move down to some snowdrifts on the low lying land at Cape Elizabeth. They had been hunting inland all the summer, and there were numerous good meat depots established in the neighborhood. There was oil enough to warm up the houses for a while, but the last bag of blubber had already been opened. We decided therefore to go hunting on the ice. It was necessary first of all, however, to spend one day in fetching in stores of caribou meat from the depots, as there was no saying how long it might be before we procured any other.

On the day of the final move, all were up betimes and busily at work. Pots and dishes and kitchen utensils generally were trundled out through the passages, with great bales of caribou skins, some new and untouched, others more or less prepared, and huge unwieldy bundles of clothing, men's, women's and children's. The things had not seemed to take up much room within doors, where everything had its place and use, but the whole collection stacked outside in the open air looked as cumbersome and chaotic, as unmistakably "moving" as the worldly goods of any city and suburban family waiting on the pavement for the furniture van.

Just at the last moment, when the sledges were loaded up to the full, and the teams ready to start, I had the good fortune to witness a characteristic little ceremony; the initiation of an infant setting out on its first journey into the world.



Aua's snow camp

An opening appeared somewhere at the back of Kuvdlo's house, and through it came crawling Mrs. Kuvdlo, with the little new-born infant in her arms. She planted herself in front of the hut and stood waiting until Aua appeared. Aua, of course, was the spiritual shepherd of the flock. He stepped forward towards the child, bared its head, and placing his lips close to its face, uttered the following heathen equivalent of a morning prayer:

"I rise up from rest,
Moving swiftly as the raven's wing
I rise up to meet the day – Wa-wa.
My face is turned from the dark of night
My gaze toward the dawn,
Toward the whitening dawn."

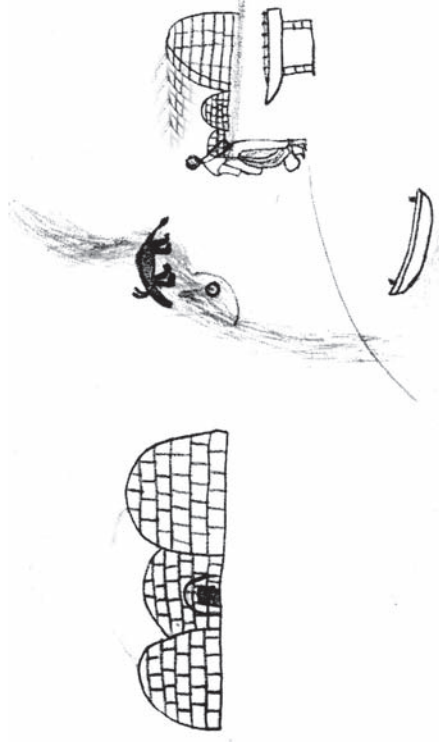
It was the child's first journey, and the morning hymn was a magic formula to bring it luck through life.

The winter ice extends some miles out from the shore, to all intents and purposes as firm as land. Then comes the water, with pack ice drifting this way and that according to wind and current. When the wind is blowing off shore, holes appear in the ice just at the edge, and the walrus follow these, diving down to the bottom to feed.

Aua and I had settled ourselves, like the others, in comparative shelter behind a hummock of ice, with a good view all round. The vigil was by no means monotonous; there was something going on all the time, calling up memories of past hunting. The pack ice was in constant movement, surging and straining and groaning at every check. Now and then a gap would appear, and the naked water sent up a freezing mist like blue smoke, through which we could just discern the



Ivaluardjuk – Aua's brother



Apak, daughter of the shaman Aua, was visionary and here drew one of her visions – a four-legged mountain spirit
by Apak 3

black shapes of the walrus rising to breathe. We could hear their long, slow gasp – and then down they went to their feeding grounds below. We had both experienced it all many a time before; and the familiar sights and sounds loosened our tongues in recollection.

“Men and the beasts are much alike,” said Aua sagely. “And so it was our fathers believed that men could be animals for a time, then men again.” So he told the story of a bear he had once observed, hunting walrus like a human being, creeping up and taking cover, till it got within range, when it flung a huge block of ice that struck its victim senseless.

Then suddenly Aua himself gave a start – he had been keeping a good look out all the time – and pointed to where Miteq was standing with his harpoon raised. Just ahead of him was a tiny gap in the ice, the merest puddle, with barely room for the broad back of a walrus that now appeared. Miteq waited till the head came up, and then, before the creature had time to breathe, drove his harpoon deep into the blubber of its flank. There was a gurgle of salt water, a fountain of spray flung out over the ice, and the walrus disappeared. But Miteq had already thrust his ice-axe through the loop at the end of his harpoon line, and the walrus was held.

We hurried up and helped to haul it in, dispatched it, and set about the work of cutting up. This was completed before dark, and when we drove in that night to the new snow palace at Iribleriang, I was proud to feel that one of my own party had given these professionals a lead on their own ground.

There was great rejoicing at our arrival; a full-grown walrus means meat and blubber for many days, and this was the first day we had been

out. There was no longer any need to stint the blubber for the lamps, and there was food in plenty for ourselves and the dogs.

A well-stocked larder sets one's mind at rest, and one feels more at liberty to consider higher things. Also, our surroundings generally were comfortable enough. The new snow hut was not quite as large as the former, and lacked the fantastic icicle adornment within; but it was easier to make it warm and cosy. The main portion, the residence of Aua and his wife, was large enough to sleep twenty with ease. Opening out of this, through a lofty portal, was a kind of entrance hall, where you brush off the snow before coming in to the warmth of the inner apartment. On the opposite side again was a large, light annex, accommodating two families. As long as there was blubber enough, seven or eight lamps were kept burning, and the place was so warm that one could go about half naked and enjoy it. Which shows what can be made out of a snowdrift when you know how to go about it.

Aua gave me leave to ask questions, and promised to answer them. And I questioned him accordingly, chiefly upon matters of religion, having already perceived that the religious ideas of these people must be in the main identical with those of the Greenland Eskimo.

A prominent character in the Greenland mythology is the Mistress of the Sea, who lives on the floor of the ocean. I asked Aua to tell me all he could about her. Nothing loath, he settled himself to the task, and with eloquent gestures and a voice that rose and fell in accord with the tenor of his theme, he told the story of the goddess of meat from the sea.

Briefly, it is as follows: There was once a girl who refused all offers of marriage, until at last she was enticed away by a petrel disguised as a handsome young man. After living with him for some time, she was rescued by her father, but the petrel, setting out in pursuit, raised a violent storm, and the father, in terror, threw the girl overboard to lighten the boat. She clung to the side, and he chopped off, first the tips of her fingers, then the other joints, and finally the wrists. And the joints turned into seal and walrus as they fell into the sea. But the girl sank to the bottom, and lives there now, and rules over all the creatures of the sea. She is called Takanaluk Arnaluk; and it is her father who is charged with the punishment of those who have sinned on earth and are not yet allowed to enter the land of the dead.

Aua's wife was one of those women who give themselves up entirely to the care of their house and those about them. She was never idle for a moment during the day, and the amount of work she managed to get through was astonishing. She liked needlework best, but there was certainly no lack of that, in the repairing of all the garments worn and



The three shaman brothers of Igloodik/Repulse Bay:
Ivaluardjuk, Aua and Pilakapsi

torn in the daily hunting expeditions. And there were many other duties to attend to. She had to fetch in snow for melting, and see that the bucket was always full. Meat had to be thawed on the side bench, where a portion must always be in readiness, dog food must be cut up and kept ready for the teams on their return, there was blubber to be frozen and beaten to make the oil run of itself ready for the lamp, and the lamp in turn had to be carefully tended so that it did not smoke. If the heat in the hut rose beyond a certain limit the snow on the inside of the roof would melt and drip; this had to be stopped by the application of fresh lumps of snow from without, plastered on to the weakening spots. Should an actual hole be thawed in roof or walls, she had to go outside herself and trim the opening, filling it up then with fresh blocks of snow. Raw sealskins had to be scraped free of blubber and stretched out to dry over the lamp, slabs of hide for sole leather, hard as wood, had to be chewed till soft. All these household duties however, were cheerfully taken as part of her busy day, to the accompaniment of scraps of song; and one could always be sure of hearing the music of cooking pots joined to Orulo's contented humming when the hunters were expected home.

Thus the hours passed, and withal she found time to glance in now and again at the other houses and help out any little scarcity, a portion of

meat here, a lump of blubber there, wherever any might be running short. I had often asked her to tell me something about her life and such events as had made any impression on her mind, but she always turned it off with a joke; there was nothing to tell. I would not leave her in peace, however; for this seemed to me an amusing fashion in which to get a glimpse of Eskimo life. At last one day when we were all alone in the house, and the others out hunting, she began to talk. She was sitting in her usual workplace behind the lamp, with her bare legs crossed, sewing at a pair of waterproof boots, when suddenly she herself interrupted me in my work, breaking out without the least introduction into a flow of old recollections:

"I am called Orulo ('the difficult one'), but my name is really Aqgiarjuk ('the little ptarmigan'). I was born at the mouth of Admiralty Inlet. While I was still a little child carried on my mother's back, my parents left Baffin Land and settled at Igloodik.

"The first thing I can remember is that my mother lived quite alone in a little snow hut. I could not understand why my father would live in another house, but then I was told that it was because my mother had just had a child and was therefore unclean and must not be near the animals killed for some time to come. But I was allowed to visit her when I liked; only I could never find the entrance to that hut. I was so little that I could not see over the block of snow the others stepped across as they went in, so I had to stand there calling out 'Mother, Mother, I want to come in!' until someone came and lifted me over into the passage. And then when I was inside, the snow bench where she sat looked so high, so high, I could not get up there myself but had to be lifted. I was no bigger than that when I first began to remember things.

"The next thing I remember is from Piling, a big hunting ground in Baffin Land. I remember gnawing meat from the leg of a bird, a huge big thighbone, and I was told it was a goose. Up till then I knew nothing bigger than ptarmigan, and thought it must be a terribly big bird.

"Then all my memories disappear, until one day as it were, I wake up again, and then we were living at a place called The Mountain. My father was ill, all the others in the place had gone off hunting inland, and I was left alone. Father had pains in his chest and lungs, and grew worse and worse. We were quite alone, my mother, my two little brothers and I, and mother was very unhappy.

"One day I came running into the tent and called out: 'Here are white men coming!' I had seen what I thought must be white men; but when my father heard it, he gave a deep sigh, and said, 'Alas I thought I might yet live and breathe a little while; but now I know that I shall never go out hunting any more.'



Igtuk the boomer
by Anarqaq⁶

many feasts on that occasion, feasts such I had only heard about, but never taken part in myself.”

Orulo had been thoroughly in earnest in telling me the story of her life, and I had noticed, as she worked herself up, how the memories came crowding in upon her and took possession of her completely. When at last she had finished her story, she burst out crying, as if overwhelmed by some great sorrow. I asked what was the cause of her emotion, and she answered:

“I have today been a child once more. While I was telling you all about my life, I lived it over again, and saw and felt everything in the same way as when it really happened. There are so many things we do not think of until the memoirs are upon us. And now you have learned the life of an old woman from the very beginning to this day. And I could not help crying for joy to think I had been so happy...”

I asked Aua why the soul was always given so prominent a place in their religious ideas, and he answered: “We ignorant Eskimos living up here do not believe, as you have told us many white men do, in one great solitary spirit that from a place far up in the sky maintains humanity and all the life of nature. Among us, as I have already explained to you, all is bound up with the earth we live on and our life here; and it would be even more incomprehensible, even more unreasonable, if, after a life short or long, of happy days or of suffering and misery, we were then to cease altogether from existence. What we have heard about the soul shows us that the life of men and beasts does not end with death. When at the end of life we draw our last breath, that is not the end. We awake to consciousness again, we come to life again, and all this is effected through the medium of the soul. Therefore it is that we regard the soul as the greatest and most incomprehensible of all. In our ordinary everyday life we do not think much about all these things, and it is only now you ask that so many thoughts arise in my head of long-known things: old thoughts, but as it were becoming altogether new when one has to put them into words.”

Religion And Views of Life –
We Do Not Believe, We Fear

The sketches of Eskimo life given in the foregoing show that these people, like so many other children of Nature, accept all pleasant happenings



Three spirits
by Anarqaq⁷

with great and spontaneous rejoicing, while evil times are endured with a surprising and often sublime resignation. But in their autobiographies, the religious ideas expressed are so hesitating and uncertain that it seems at first as if all were confusion and that the contradictions continually met with must almost preclude the finding of any sense in the scheme as a whole. One is here too often apt to forget that one is dealing with primitive minds, and only when one has realised that the mode of thought and the logic of the stone age are not the same as ours can one appreciate the underlying unity in all these apparent inconsistencies.

I once went out to Aua's hunting quarters on the ice outside Lyon Inlet to spend some time with the men I have referred to in the foregoing. For several evenings we had discussed rules of life and taboo customs without getting beyond a long and circumstantial statement of all that was permitted and all that was forbidden. Everyone knew precisely what had to be done in any given situation, but whenever I put in my query: “Why?” they could give no answer. They regarded it, and very rightly, as unreasonable that I should require not only an account, but also a justification, of their religious principles. They had of course no idea that all my questions, now that I had obtained the information I wished for, were only intended to make them react in such a manner that they should, excited by my inquisitiveness, be able to give an inspired explanation. Aua had as usual been the spokesman, and as he was still unable to answer my questions, he rose to his feet, and as if seized by a sudden impulse, invited me to go outside with him.

It had been an unusually rough day, and as we had plenty of meat after the successful hunting of the past few days, I had asked my host to stay at home so that we could get some work done together. The brief daylight had given place to the half-light of the afternoon, but as the moon was up one could still see some distance. Ragged white clouds raced across the sky, and when a gust of wind came tearing over the ground, our eyes and mouths were filled with snow. Aua looked me full in the face, and pointing out over

the ice, where the snow was being lashed about in waves by the wind, he said:

“In order to hunt well and live happily, man must have calm weather. Why this constant succession of blizzards and all this needless hardship for men seeking food for themselves and those they care for? Why? Why?”

We had come out just at the time when the men were returning from their watching at the blowholes on the ice; they came in little groups,



A bear breaking into a tent and attacking a child

by Taparte

bowed forward, toiling along against the wind, which actually forced them now and again to stop, so fierce were the gusts. Not one of them had a seal in tow; their whole day of painful effort and endurance had been in vain.

I could give no answer to Aua's "Why?" but shook my head in silence. He then led me into Kublo's house, which was close beside our own. The small blubber lamp burned with but the faintest flame, giving out no heat whatever; a couple of children crouched, shivering, under a skin rug on the bench.

Aua looked at me again, and said: "Why should it be cold and comfortless in here? Kublo has been out hunting all day, and if he had got a seal, as he deserved, his wife would now be sitting laughing beside her lamp, letting it burn full, without fear of having no blubber left for tomorrow. The place would be warm and bright and cheerful. The children would come out from under their rugs and enjoy life.

Why should it not be so? Why?"

I made no answer, and he fed me out of the house, in to a little snow hut where his sister Natseq lived all by herself because she was ill. She looked thin and worn, and was not even interested in our coming. For several days she had suffered from a malignant cough that seemed to come from far down in the lungs, and it looked as if she had not long to live.

A third time Aua looked at me and said: "Why must people be ill and suffer pain? We are all afraid of illness. Here is this old sister of mine; as far as anyone can see, she has done no evil; she has lived through a long life and given birth to healthy children, and now she must suffer before her days end. Why? Why?"

This ended his demonstration, and we returned to our house, to resume, with the others, the interrupted discussion.

"You see," said Aua, "you are equally unable to give any reason when we ask you why life is as it is. And so it must be. All our customs come from life and turn towards life; we explain nothing, we believe nothing, but in what I have just shown you lies our answer to all you ask.

"We fear the weather spirit of earth, that we must fight against to wrest our food from land and sea. We fear Sila.

"We fear death and hunger in the cold snow huts.

"We fear Takanakapsaluk, the great woman down at the bottom of the sea, that rules over all the beasts of the sea.

"We fear the sickness that we meet with daily all around us; not death, but the suffering. We fear the evil spirits of life, those of the air, of the sea and the earth, that can help wicked shamans to harm their fellow men.

"We fear the souls of dead human beings and of the animals we have killed.

"Therefore it is that our fathers have inherited from their fathers all the old rules of life which are based on the experience and wisdom of generations. We do not know how, we cannot say why, but we keep those rules in order that we may live untroubled. And so ignorant are we in spite of all our shamans, that we fear everything unfamiliar. We fear what we see about us, and we fear all the invisible things that are likewise about us, all that we have heard of in our forefathers' stories and myths. Therefore we have our customs, which are not the same as those of the white men, the white men who live in another land and have need of other ways."

That was Aua's explanation; he was, as always, clear in his line of thought, and with a remarkable power of expressing what he meant. He was silent then, and as I did not at once resume the conversation, his younger brother Ivaluardjuk took up the theme, and said:

"The greatest peril of life lies in the fact that human food consists entirely of souls.

"All the creatures that we have to kill and eat, all those that we have to strike down and destroy to make clothes for ourselves, have souls, like we have, souls that do not perish with the body, and which must therefore be propitiated lest they should revenge themselves on us for taking away their bodies."

"In the old days, it was far worse than it is now," put in Anarfik, "Everything was more difficult, and our customs accordingly much more strict. In those days, men hunted only with bow and arrow and knew nothing of the white men's firearms. It was far more difficult to live then, and often men could not get food enough. The caribou were hunted in

kayaks at the crossing of rivers and lakes, being driven out into the water where they could be easily overtaken in a kayak. But it was hard to make them run the way one wished, and therefore rules were very strict about those places. No woman was allowed to work there, no bone of any animal might be broken, no brain or marrow eaten. To do so would be an insult to the souls of the caribou, and was punished by death or disaster. There is an old story, and a true one, showing the danger that lurks in the souls of animals for us human beings, and it is: ‘The woman who has been swallowed up by the earth for having offended the souls of the beasts.’

“Once some women were left alone at a spot where the caribou were accustomed to swim across a river. The women were to wait there for their husbands, who were away hunting. But the men were away a long time, and the women had not food enough, and being near starvation, gathered together bones of animals that had been killed there some time before, and to save their lives, boiled fat from the bones and ate it. Thus they managed to save themselves from dying of hunger, but in doing so disobeyed the strict rule that forbids any breaking of bones at the fords.

“At last, after a long time, their men came home from the hunting, and some had found game and others none. One of the men who had got nothing told his wife she had better go away to her elder brother. His comrades tried to persuade her to stay, saying they would willingly feed her now that they had meat enough, but she did as her husband had said and went off to her brother. She reached the place where he was and lived with him. One day her brother’s wife asked her to carry their little child in the amauti, as she herself wanted to make a pair of kamiks for her husband. The woman went out with her brother’s child, and sat down in a small gully not far from the house. And while she was there, the earth suddenly closed over her and she could not get out. Later in the day, the woman and child were missed, and when some went out to search for them, it was seen that the earth had closed over them, and the child could be heard crying, and the woman singing:

“Little one, do not cry,
Mother will come and fetch you
When she has finished her sewing.
I am afraid of my husband,
And dare not go home,
I would gladly go home to the two brothers
Who wished me to stay;
I am afraid of my husband
And dare not go home.



The Danish members of the Fifth Thule Expedition

Kaj Birket-Smith	Therkel Mathiassen	Helge Bangsted
Peder Pedersen	Knud Rasmussen	Peter Freuchen Jacob Olsen

I must live all my days a-visiting
Grow old as a woman a-visiting,
And never dare to go home.”

“So the woman perished because she had done what was forbidden at the sacred places. The powerful souls of the caribou had killed her.”

By the middle of January, I had the ethnographical collections in shape so that I could leave Danish Island for good. But we still needed a few items. I wanted a few more skin dresses to round out the collection, and I wished to make a final study of the spiritual beliefs of the Eskimos of the region. Accordingly, I set off for the hunting camp at the mouth of Lyon Inlet, to visit my old friend Aua.

Aua’s hunting camp lay midway out in Lyon Inlet; I reached it late one afternoon, just as the setting sun was gilding the domes of the snow huts.

It was known that I was on the way, and above each hut waved a little white flag – a sign that the inmates had relinquished their old heathen faith and become Christians. As I drove up, men, women and children trooped out and formed up in line outside Aua’s hut, and as soon as I had reined in my team, the whole party began singing a hymn. The tune was so unlike what they were accustomed to in their own pagan chants that they bungled it a little, but there was no mistaking the earnestness and pious

feeling which inspired it. There was something very touching in such a greeting; these poor folk had plainly found in the new faith a refuge that meant a great deal in their lives.

When it was over, they stepped forward one by one and shook hands. And here I could not but recall my first meeting with these same people a year ago, at Cape Elizabeth. Then, they had come leaping and capering round me in an outburst of unrestrained natural feeling; now, all was ceremonial and solemn to an almost painful degree.

It was not long, however, before this wore off, and the old easy merriment showed forth again. The carcass of a seal was brought out and thrown to the dogs, and while they were busy with it, I was regaled with the latest news. Then my sledge was hoisted up onto a stand built of blocks of snow, and I myself invited indoors to thaw. Aua's wife, Orulo, good friendly soul, had a fine big bowl of steaming hot tea for me, and when this had driven out some of the cold I could settle down at ease among my old friends.

It was the most difficult time of the year just now; the stores of meat accumulated during summer had been used up, and it was a question of procuring fresh supplies for men and dogs, from day to day. Seal were hunted now either at the breathing holes or in the open water beyond the edge of the ice. The weather was rough and stormy, snow falling every day, and the thermometer rarely above minus 50°C. The days were short, and in order to make the most of them, the hunters set off before daylight and returned after dark. All meat brought in was cut up and distributed at once throughout the camp, and as there was generally no more than would suffice for one day, the arrival of the next installment was looked



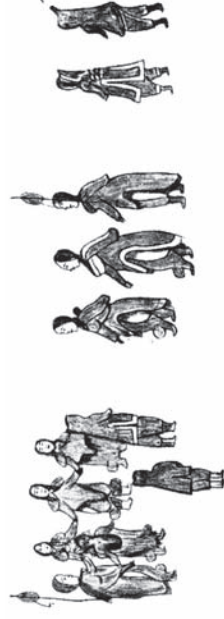
Knud Rasmussen

forward to with anxiety literally equal to that with which hungry folk look forward to a meal.

The men had little rest these days. It is a weary business to be out for ten hours at a stretch, first searching about to find the blowhole of a seal, and having found it, to stand motionless in the driving snow waiting for the seal to come up to breathe. A seal has always a number of blowholes open at once, and it might often be hours before it appeared at the one actually under observation. No wonder then, that the hunters were stiff and sore by the time they returned. Throwing off all but their innermost clothing, they threw themselves down on the bench in the warmth of the hut, while the women busied themselves cutting up the carcasses into juicy red fillets edged with rich yellowish blubber. Then, when the pots began to boil, came the reward of the day's toil, in the shape of a steaming cup of thick blood-soup. The next course was meat, speared up from the cauldron on long bone skewers, and dumped down upon a wooden tray enriched with the juices of many a former meal. A sense of warmth and comfort spread and grew, the little triumphs or disappointments of the day were recounted with good humor; material wants were satisfied for the time being, and peace and plenty reigned.

These evenings, when we lay stretched at ease after a hearty meal, and the most taciturn had thawed into some degree of geniality, were the times I most looked forward to for converse with my hosts.

In the collecting of folk lore, one is altogether dependent upon the character and temper of one's sources; it is essential to have native authorities not only qualified in regard to knowledge of their subject but also gifted with the right appreciation of it themselves. They must be reliable, so that one can listen without criticising all the time, and one should if possible be on friendly terms with them throughout. Aua and his wife Orulo eminently fulfilled these conditions; we were excellent friends, and the two old folk, pooling the experience and learning of their respective lives, combined to furnish a mine of information. What one did



The women going over to the team that won the archery contest
(Detail from the qulumertut games)
by Pakak