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978-1-108-07097-3 - Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo: With a Sketch of their Habits, Religion, Language and Other Peculiarities

Hinrich Rink Edited by Robert Brown

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Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo

The Danish geologist and geographer Hinrich Rink (1819–93) amassed decades of experience in exploring Greenland, becoming well versed in the language and customs of the Inuit. The present work is a condensed version of his investigations into indigenous culture, first published in two volumes in 1866 and 1871. Rink revised and translated the work from Danish into English for this 1875 publication, and the text was emended by the Scottish scientist and explorer Robert Brown (1842–95). In the book's first part, Rink describes succinctly the Inuit mode of life in Greenland. The second part, which is significantly longer, recounts the legends and folk tales that Rink had recorded on his travels. The book also includes a number of illustrations drawn and engraved by the Inuit people themselves. This work will appeal to those interested in the history of Inuit culture and nineteenth-century ethnography.

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HINRICH RINK

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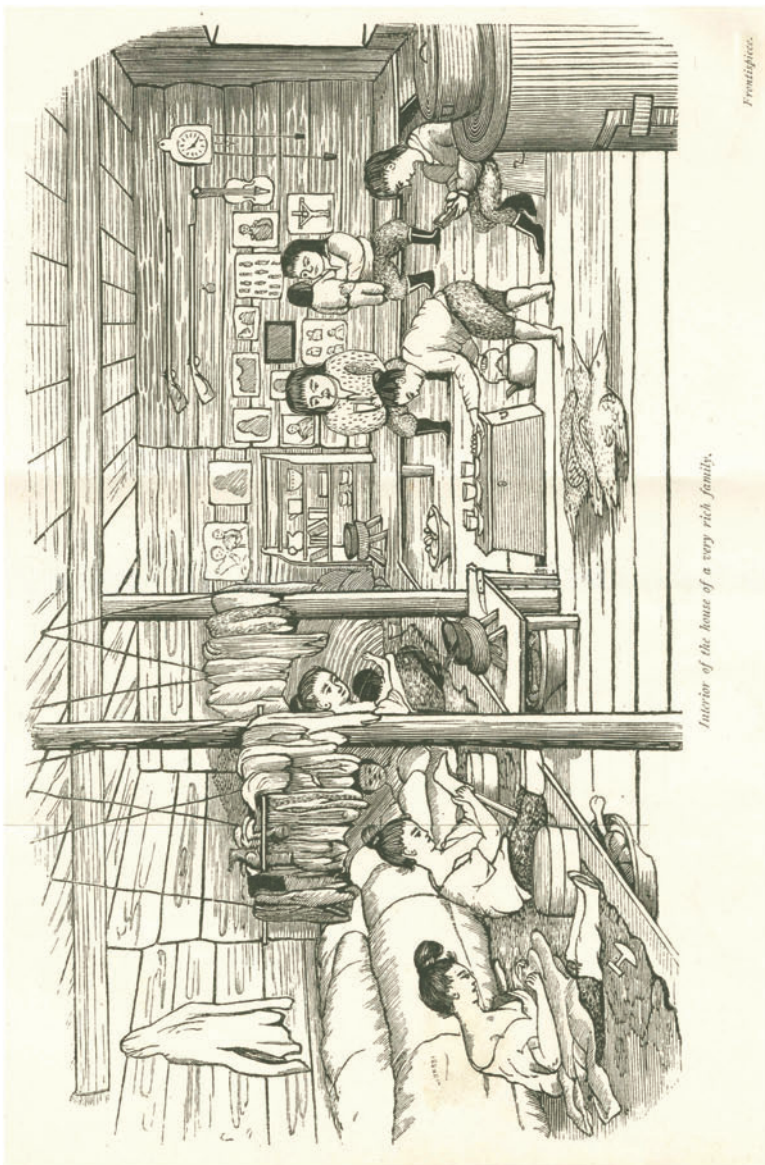
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TALES AND TRADITIONS

OF THE

ESKIMO

WITH A SKETCH OF

THEIR HABITS, RELIGION, LANGUAGE
AND OTHER PECULIARITIES

BY

DR HENRY RINK

KNIGHT OF DANNEBROG

DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL GREENLAND BOARD OF TRADE, AND
FORMERLY ROYAL INSPECTOR OF SOUTH GREENLAND
AUTHOR OF 'GRÖNLAND GEOGRAPHISK OG
STATISTISK BESKREVEN,' ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH BY THE AUTHOR

EDITED BY

DR ROBERT BROWN

F.L.S., F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF 'THE RACES OF MANKIND,' ETC.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS, DRAWN AND
ENGRAVED BY ESKIMO

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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P R E F A C E.

THE author of this work has partly resided, partly been travelling about, on the shores of Davis Strait, from the southernmost point of Greenland up to 73° north latitude, for sixteen winters and twenty-two summers; first as a scientific explorer, afterwards as Royal Inspector or Governor of the Southern Danish establishments in Greenland. The first series of tales was published by him in 1866; but as this field of ethnological investigation was at that time almost uncultivated, much new material came to hand after that publication, and, moreover, the author had then only acquired such a degree of familiarity with the language, as made it possible for him to understand his native informants sufficiently well to write down their verbal communications. In 1871 he determined to publish a new series of tales as a supplement to the former, in which he has also described the general habits, religion, and other peculiarities of the Eskimo, having by that time been enabled to give a more comprehensive account of these subjects, and to make some farther improvements on the first publication.

Besides the translation into English, a twofold object has been aimed at in this edition: first, that of incorporating the two parts into one; and second, of partly abbreviating their contents. The principal aim of this

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abridgment has been to make these accounts more available to readers engaged in archæological studies, or investigations of the earliest history of mankind by comparison of the traditional tales, languages, and religious opinions of the more primitive nations, in which respect the Eskimo, and specially the Greenlanders, have been studied more minutely, perhaps, than any other similar people. Keeping this object in view, some of the tales, as well as a certain part of the original work, seemed to be of special interest only to the Danish colonies, and have therefore been wholly omitted, or only given in an abridged form, in the present publication.

The wholly modern study of “prehistoric man,” which in our time is making such progress, has hitherto almost exclusively been founded upon the study of the ornaments, weapons, and other remains of primitive peoples, which for this purpose have become greatly valued, and are searched for in the bowels of the earth, and drawn forth to light in nearly every part of the globe. But the time will certainly come when any relics of spiritual life brought down to us from prehistoric mankind, which may still be found in the folklore of the more isolated and primitive nations, will be valued as highly as those material remains. In this respect the Eskimo may be considered among the most interesting, both as having been almost entirely cut off from other nations and very little influenced by foreign intercourse, and also as representing a kind of link between the aboriginals of the New and the Old World.

Some illustrations, designed as well as drawn and engraved on wood by natives of Greenland, are given, the author having supplied the original blocks to be used in this edition for this purpose.

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As to the spelling of Greenland words and names, we have to draw a distinction between those which are more properly used as representing the foreign expressions themselves, and those which have been wholly embodied in the Danish or English language of the text, and thereby subject to the orthography of these languages. In the first instance, the words distinguished by a different type, are spelt in exact accordance with the orthography now adopted in the native schools of Greenland. In the preliminary sketch, where this orthography is explained, it will be seen that all the sounds may be expressed by our usual Latin characters, with the exception only of a deep guttural *k*, for which the character *κ* has been formed; the other more peculiar sounds having been substituted by double consonants or expressed by accents. The other letters are pronounced almost identically with those of the German and Scandinavian languages. In the second instance we have, as far as possible, accommodated the mode of spelling to the English pronunciation of the letters, in some instances using *y* for *j*, *gh* for *g*, *k*, or in some more peculiar cases, *k'* for *κ*, &c.; as, for instance, *anghiak* (*ångiak*), *kayak* (*κajak*), *k'ivigtok* (*κivigtok*).

The personal and geographical names are given with fewer alterations of the kind mentioned, and nearly agree with the Danish orthography.

To prevent, as far as possible, misunderstanding and farther corruption of the original Greenland words, we have added, wherever it appeared necessary, in parentheses, how the word is most nearly to be pronounced (pron. . . .), in other instances how it is to be correctly spelt in Greenlandish (cor. sp. . . .); as, for instance, *Kulange* (pron. *Koolanglee*), *angakok* (cor. sp. *angakoκ*).

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The following general rules may be laid down : The letter *e* at the end of a word is never mute, but always to be pronounced ; *ai* is pronounced like *y* in *by* ; *i*, like *i* in *it* ; *g*, like *g* in *good* ; *u*, like *oo*.

In some instances we have used the Greenland plural, formed by substituting a *t* at the end of the word, such as *angakut* instead of *angakoks*.

As to uncommon words or expressions in general, those peculiar to Eskimo life will be found explained in the preliminary sketch. But in order to make the stories more readable, as well as better understood, we have, without paying particular attention to this, inserted the most necessary explanations in parentheses or in notes, in different places of the text itself, where it appeared most useful ; especially in the earlier pages, where the expressions are first met with.

Dr Robert Brown, who at the author's request has been good enough to revise the manuscript and make such corrections or emendations in the style and construction of the collection as in his judgment were advisable, has had in his travels in the northern regions of America, as well as in Greenland and on the western shores of Davis Strait and Baffin Bay, an opportunity of visiting the aborigines of these countries in their own homes ; and these advantages, coupled with his long personal acquaintance with the author, and his experience as a writer on Ethnology, have rendered him peculiarly fitted for this friendly editorial task.

H. R.

KONGL. GRÖNDLANDSKE HANDEL,
COPENHAGEN, *Sept.* 1875.

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