

Dr. RINK'S "ESKIMO TRIBES."

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This work* is the most important contribution to the general history of the Eskimos that has appeared for many years, perhaps the most important since the same writer's "Tales and Traditions of the Eskimos."

Dr. Rink, from his long residence in Greenland, his great familiarity with the Eskimo language and his extended acquaintance with the literature of the subject, is perhaps better fitted than any man living to choose with discrimination from the vast stores of observations collected by various explorers and to draw valuable conclusions from this material.

In this work he has presented in an extended form the opinions which he has expressed in previous articles in regard to the early migrations of the Eskimos. In his previous writings he has assigned particular importance to the arguments to be derived from the study of language and traditions. In the present work all his formal arguments are drawn from the study of arts, habits, and customs, including religion and folklore, leaving the linguistic argument to be presented at the end of the book in the form of a carefully prepared comparative vocabulary.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is entitled "The Eskimo Tribes; their common origin, their dispersion, and their diversities in general." The purpose of this section is (in the author's words) "to show what conclusions it is possible to draw from the mode of life, the customs and usages of the Eskimos, so far as regards the migrations by which they have spread over their present territory." But the writer explicitly disclaims any decided opinion on the vexed question, "Whether the cradle of the race was in America or Asia." Any one who has given attention to the history of the Eskimos will, I think, agree with Dr. Rink

* The Eskimo Tribes: Their Distribution and Characteristics, especially in Regard to Language. With a comparative vocabulary and a sketch-map. By Dr. Henry Rink. [Vol. XI of the "Meddelelser om Grønland."] Copenhagen and London, 1887. 8vo, pp. 163.

that the time has not yet come for an expression of opinion upon this question.

Starting with the ancestors of the present Eskimos, established in a common home somewhere on this continent, Dr. Rink's theory of their dispersion, in brief, is as follows:

Though the Eskimos are undoubtedly all of one race, which is shown, as Dr. Rink has already pointed out, by the marvellous similarity in their culture and language from one side of the continent to the other, there are, nevertheless, differences "which indicate that after having taken their first step to being an exclusively maritime people they have still during their migrations been subjected to further development in the same direction, aiming at adapting them especially for the Arctic coasts as their proper home." Hence, if we find a progressive series of differences in culture extending across the region they occupy and reaching its highest development at the farthest extreme, we can infer that their migration followed the line indicated by this series. Dr. Rink believes that he has discovered such a series of differences extending from Southern Alaska to Greenland.

Taking up first "Inventions for procuring the necessary means of subsistence," he discusses the kayak, with its accompanying weapons and gear and double-bladed paddle, and shows a tolerably regular series, from the heavy and clumsy kayak of the Kuskokwim and Yukon delta, propelled by a single paddle, to the wonderfully developed boat of the Greenland sealhunter, swift as an arrow and capable of being "rolled unhurt by the waves." This series is, however, not so regular as Dr. Rink appears to believe. The collections of the United States National Museum show very plainly that along the Arctic coast of Alaska there is a region from Kotzebue Sound northward to Point Barrow where the kayak is quite as light and nearly as finely modeled as in Greenland, though of quite distinct form.

Similar arguments are drawn from the progressive development of the harpoon. Dr. Rink is, however, mistaken in supposing that the "bladder-arrow" (a dart for the capture of the smaller seals with a bladder attached to the shaft) is in ordinary use at Point Barrow. It is now entirely obsolete there, and when seals are hunted from the kayak, which is not often done, a small dart is used whose shaft is so fastened to the line as to drag transversely through the water and thus impede the movements of the animal.

In the same way the art of managing the kayak reaches its fullest development in the east.

"Dwellings" are next discussed, and a regular series is pointed out, from the square wooden houses in Southern Alaska with a hearth in the middle of the floor, resembling those of the Indians, to the elongated house of the Greenlanders, capable of being added to at the ends as the number of inmates increases, culminating in the enormous communal house of the East Greenlanders. There is, however, in my opinion, a serious break in this series, as well as in that of the kayaks. The rude bone and turf houses of the Central Region seem to me far too primitive for their position in the series, while the bee-hive shaped snow "iglus" are, in all probability, descendants, so to speak, of the tent, and thus not at all in the line of development.

"Dress and ornaments" show comparatively little of this progressive development, except in the case of the lip ornaments, or *labrets*, so well known from descriptions of the Western Eskimos. Dr. Rink believes that the custom of wearing these ornaments (or *labretifery*, to use Mr. Dall's expression) was one of the original characteristics of the Eskimos which "succumbed" in the Arctic Archipalego, owing to the extreme discomfort of wearing the labrets in that severe climate. He adds, "In Greenland, strange to say, it is not known, as far as I remember, even from the folklore." In my opinion, it is by no means strange that no traces of it should be found in Greenland—or anywhere east of Cape Bathurst, for that matter. Since we have known the Western Eskimos, and in all probability for an indefinite time previous to that, there has been no communication between the people of Cape Bathurst and those of the Coppermine river, their nearest neighbors in the east, while to the westward all accounts agree that the communication has been regular, though slow, from Cape Bathurst to Southern Alaska. If, then, as I believe, labretifery is a habit which has gradually worked its way along the western coast of America from the southward, at a time remote indeed, but not so remote as the time when the Eskimos reached their present abodes, it would come to a stop at Cape Bathurst, and we should naturally find no trace of it east of that point.

"Domestic industry and arts" show but unimportant differences, though the Eskimo skill in carving and engraving, with the taste shown in their clothing, gradually declines as we pass from Alaska

to the east, almost disappearing in West Greenland, to reappear in a remarkable manner among the isolated East Greenlanders.

The bearings of religion, folklore, and sociology on the question are discussed at considerable length. Dr. Rink believes that progressive development is shown in the increasing influence of the *angakoks*, or wizards, as we advance from Alaska to Greenland, and at the same time finds a gradual simplification of the social organization from west to east. Under the head of sociology he gives a most excellent statement of what is known of the social organization of the Eskimos throughout their range, laying special stress on the fact that there is no evidence among them of what are called "gentes" among other savage races.

By this discussion, our author states that he has endeavored to show that "the peculiarities of the tribes in the different domains of culture agree with the supposition that the original Eskimo inhabited the interior of Alaska, that apart from the true Eskimo a side branch of them, in the farthest remote period, peopled the Aleutian Islands, whereas people of the principal race later on settled at the river mouths, spreading northward along Behring Strait and, hiving off some colonies to the opposite shore, proceeded around Point Barrow to the east, the Mackenzie river, over the Central Regions or Arctic Archipalego, and finally to Labrador and Greenland. This dispersion may have taken thousands of years; they can only have proceeded in small bands, very much as they still are used to move about during certain seasons. Their only way of procuring subsistence in the vast deserts they passed over excluded the possibility of national migrations on a larger scale."

Dr. Rink has long ago declared his belief that the Eskimos were an originally inland people who had reached the Arctic Ocean by way of the great rivers, and I think that most ethnologists who have given attention to the subject agree with him thus far.

Nevertheless, I, for one, am by no means convinced that Dr. Rink's latest hypothesis is the correct interpretation of the evidence. While the geographical distribution of the variations of the different Eskimo implements is remarkably definite, I am not at all sure that this is best explained by the hypothesis of a migration in the direction assumed.

The very extensive collections of the United States National Museum have afforded me many opportunities of making actual comparisons of the objects from different localities, and these com-

parisons, in connection with what I have learned from the writings of other investigators, have brought me definitely to the following conclusions: The Western Eskimos, from Cape Bathurst to Southern Alaska, are sharply defined, in regard to culture, from those of the east and central regions. The people of the Mackenzie region have the greatest affinity with those inhabiting the Arctic coast from Point Barrow to Bering Strait. The people from the Yukon river southward form a distinct group, highly specialized in their culture towards their southern limit. The Siberian Eskimos, as far as I have been able to study them, seem to show more affinity with the northern group, while the Aleuts are widely different from all other branches of the race, east or west. East of Cape Bathurst I recognize by their culture the same divisions as Dr. Rink does, namely: the Central "tribes," in respect to most of their arts and industries by far the most simple and apparently primitive of any that I have studied; the Labradorians, closely related to the last, but somewhat more specialized; and the highly specialized group of the Greenlanders. These relationships are specially obvious in the study of particular classes of objects, as, for example, the sinew-backed bow. (See Smithsonian Report, 1884, Part II, pp. 307-316.)

In view of these results I may venture to formulate a migration hypothesis of my own, for which, with all respect for Dr. Rink's great experience, I would claim the merit of at least equal probability with his. According to my theory the tribes of the Central Region, with their primitive culture, are nearest to the original home of the race, which would have been the region lying south of Hudson's Bay instead of the interior of Alaska. Here one stream should have branched off to populate the peninsula of Labrador, while the main body pushed north along the western shore of Hudson's Bay to settle in the Arctic Archipelago and finally reach Greenland (as Dr. Rink believes) by way of Smith Sound, leaving the traces of their journey in the ruined iglus and other relics now found far north of the present range of any Eskimos on the west of Baffin's Bay.

Leaving their original home—apparently before the Labradorians branched off—another large body should have continued on to the north, in the network of lakes and rivers, always keeping east of the Rocky Mountains, until they were able to pass to the west by way of the basin of the Yukon. Here they would again divide, one body going down the Mackenzie to spread east to Cape Bathurst

and west past Point Barrow to Bering Strait and on into Asia. The other body should have passed down the Yukon and Kusko-kwim and spread along the coast, growing more and more modified in the south by their new and peculiar environment. It will be seen that from my point of view the Southern Alaskans are not primitive, but highly specialized Eskimos, who have brought with them into a comparatively fertile and temperate region the arts which originated under far different surroundings.

I am strengthened in this view by the fact that in the well-wooded region which they inhabit they still use the sinew-backed bow, an invention that plainly owes its origin to conditions like those of the Central Regions, where suitable bow wood is almost unattainable.

In the course of his arguments Dr. Rink relates many interesting and novel facts in regard the Eskimos. To attempt to quote simply the most interesting of these would, however, expand this paper far beyond all reasonable limits.

The section closes with an account of the distribution and division of the Eskimos at the present day. He divides them into five main groups, the distribution of which is illustrated by an excellent sketch-map. These groups are: 1. The Western Eskimo. 2. The Mackenzie Eskimo or Tchigliit. 3. The tribes of the Central Regions. [This division is said to begin at Cape Bathurst, which is hardly correct, as there is no evidence that they ever extended west of the Coppermine river.—See the accounts of the early explorers, Franklin, Dease and Simpson, &c. Moreover, as previously stated, the people at Cape Bathurst appear unacquainted with their neighbors east of them.] 4. The Labradorians. 5. The Greenlanders. He follows Dall's classification of the Western Eskimos.

I may say, in passing, that during a two years' stay at Point Barrow our party* found no evidence that "Nuukmut," or Nuungmiun, was used as a general name of all the natives included under that designation by Mr. Dall. The inhabitants of each wintering-place were called "the men of such and such a place," precisely after the Greenland fashion. On the other hand, the word Nunatangiun ("Nunatogmut") appears to be used by the Point Barrow natives for *all* the inhabitants of the region round the Nunatok river, not distinguishing the people of the separate "house-places."

*U. S. International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, 1881-83.

Section II is entitled, "The Eskimo language, its admirable organization as to the construction and flexion of words." This is a most excellent and lucid sketch of the grammar and construction of the Eskimo, especially as it has been worked out for the Greenlandic dialect (chiefly by the late Samuel Kleinschmidt), with references to the variations observed in the other dialects. Material for such a comparison is tolerably full as regards the central and eastern tongues, but rather deficient for the western dialects.

This article will be of very great value for all who may wish to undertake the study of Eskimo linguistics. Though based on Kleinschmidt's "Grammatik der grönlandischen Sprache," it presents a particularly clear and simple explanation of all the points of difficulty, which in the "Grammatik" are rendered still harder by a certain over-refinement and obscurity of style.

Dr. Rink is of the opinion that "there can be no doubt that the general character of all the Eskimo talks is uniform enough to admit of their being expressed by the same system of letters." While this is undoubtedly true, it is, I think, unfortunate that Dr. Rink has selected for all his linguistic work in this book the system adopted for the written language of modern Greenland. If this alphabet is intended to be strictly phonetic, as the author states, the use of it in writing the Point Barrow dialect has certainly caused him to lose sight of certain genuine dialectic differences. For instance, the sound of the word for reindeer, *tūktu*, at Point Barrow cannot be expressed phonetically by the spelling, *tugto*. If this latter form really represents the exact pronunciation in Greenland, using the same spelling for the Point Barrow word effectually conceals an important dialectic difference. This instance is but one of a large class of similar ones. If, on the other hand, the pronunciation is the same in both places—and I am strongly inclined to believe so, from the fact that "reindeer" is spelled *tukto* in the older Greenland vocabularies—then the system of spelling is not phonetic and should not be used in comparative linguistic work.

It is unfortunate that none of the investigators who have endeavored systematically to compare the Eskimo dialects have ever had the good fortune to hear the natives of more than one of the divisions speak their own language, except Mr. L. M. Turner, who went from Alaska to Labrador and acquired great familiarity with the dialects of both regions. It is to be regretted that his linguistic work is as yet unpublished and therefore inaccessible.

At the end of the section is given a carefully revised list of the "affixes" or enclitic stems used in forming the compounds which to so great an extent replace the sentences of other languages. This list—some 200 in all—is based on the second part of Kleinschmidt's "Grønlandske Ordbog," but contains, in addition, references to such of these affixes as have been found in the other dialects. The difficulty of recognizing these affixes in the peculiar forms which they assume in the other dialects is well shown in the case of the Point Barrow dialect. Dr. Rink, working with the somewhat crude vocabulary published in Lieutenant Ray's report, finds only 10 affixes corresponding with those in Greenlandic, while the present writer, working with the material on which that vocabulary is based, has detected at least 90 affixes, of which 70 can be identified with the Greenlandic with reasonable certainty; 5 are doubtful, while the remainder appear unknown in Greenland.

The third and last section of the book is a "Comparative list of the stem-words, or independent stems of the Eskimos dialects, with examples of their derivatives." This comprises all the stems given in the "Grønlandske Ordbog," showing also how they have been recognized in the other dialects and inserting in their proper places the stems found in the other dialects which do not appear in Greenlandic. It is perhaps the most important section of the book, and has been prepared with very great care.

The comparison between the Greenlandic and the dialects of Labrador and the Central Region, which are represented by ample vocabularies, is very full and complete. That, with the Mackenzie dialect, based on Petitot's "Vocabulaire Français-Esquimau," is less complete, while for the western dialects the material is comparatively scanty, though the vocabularies collected cover a large extent of country. The most extensive of these is that already referred to as published by Lieut. Ray (Report U. S. Expedition to Point Barrow, pp. 51-60). This vocabulary, though quite large—I have been able to recognize in it at least 550 "radicals" or stem-words—is somewhat crude, having been hastily transliterated to a uniform method of spelling from the rough notes of the collectors soon after the return of the expedition. The fact that Dr. Rink was obliged to use the material in this shape has caused him to overlook at least 100 radicals corresponding to the Greenlandic, in addition to those he mentions. A misunderstanding of the use of diacritical marks in writing this vocabulary has also led him in

many cases to represent it as worse than it really is. This is especially the case with the letter *û*, which really corresponds quite well with the obscure *a* or *e* of Greenlandic, but when represented by *u*, as it is in nearly every instance, it makes the words appear less alike than they really are.

One or two words have been given a place in the list which are really not Eskimo radicals. For instance, "enakotina," quoted from Ray's vocabulary as a North Alaskan word for "red Indian," is really but an Eskimo corruption of the name of a certain tribe in the Tinné language ("Unakhotana" of Dall). The two words *quinuk* (=kuinya, Pt. Bar.) and *quviaq* (=kubra, Pt. Bar.), meaning respectively "pipe" and "net," and marked as peculiar to the North Alaskan and Mackenzie dialects, are really Siberian. From a study of the distribution of the peculiar western tobacco-pipe and of the seal-net I had convinced myself that both these inventions were of Siberian origin. I was consequently much gratified at finding these names, which I was unable to identify with any of the known Greenlandic radicals, in Nordqvist's "Tschuktschisk Ordlista" (Vega-Expeditionens Vetenskaplig. Iakttag. i, pp. 373-399).

As a whole the vocabulary is remarkably free from inaccuracies, and is admirably fitted to serve as the starting point for future linguistic work. It especially serves the purpose of bringing to our attention the remarkable similarity in the languages spoken throughout such a great extent of country. We may well hope that Dr. Rink may be able to complete the work, which no one else is so capable of doing, by working out the differences between these dialects, so as, if possible, to demonstrate the law that governs these variations.

The book is written in English for the express purpose, as the author states in his preface, of rendering it more accessible to his somewhat limited circle of readers, perhaps the majority of whom are English-speaking people. It is fortunate that he has done so, as the book in its English form cannot fail to attract and interest others outside of the small body of actual workers in the narrow field of Eskimo ethnology.