

# TRANSLATION OF I. K. VOBLOV'S "ESKIMO CEREMONIES"<sup>1</sup>

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The Eskimo inhabit an extensive territory along the shore of the Bering Sea—from Cape Dezhnev to Cross Bay. The main part of the Eskimo group is concentrated in the Chukotsky region of the Chukotsky National District. The principal occupation of the Eskimo is maritime hunting and pursuit of the fur trade.

During the years of Soviet power, the Eskimo economy and way of life have changed beyond all recognition. At the present time all the Eskimo are formed into comradeships and artels (collectives). These collectives are equipped with modern native techniques of the fur trade—motor schooners and whaleboats, whale guns, and rifles.

Eskimo settlements have electrification. In dwellings, the Eskimo blubber lamp has been replaced by the electric light, and into the Eskimo way of life the wash stand, soap, towels, bedsteads, bedding, dinner tables, and the tea set have firmly entered. Clothing of local style from reindeer and seal skins has been replaced by European clothing.

In the beginning and high schools one hundred Eskimo teachers are studying. In these schools the Eskimo work with teachers who have received special pedagogical education in the Anadyr pedagogical college and institutions of higher education in Leningrad. Only under Soviet rule was a writing system worked out. Through the direct participation of the Eskimo intelligentsia, educational, political, and artistic literature is being published in the Eskimo language. Instruction of children in the first and second classes is conducted in the native Eskimo language.

In the first ranks of the Soviet intelligentsia of the Chukotsky National District are the leading party members and Soviet worker-Eskimos, and also the schooner captains, the radio operators, and medical and other workers.

Soviet medical institutions have driven out the shaman with his charlatan methods of "treatment". Socialist culture firmly enters into the Eskimo way of life and is a powerful stimulus to the development of their national culture. Changes in the area of economics and the way of life of the Eskimo, coming about as a result of the victory of Socialism in the U.S.S.R., have led to the breaking up and liquidation of primitive customs and beliefs.

Although Eskimo ceremonies still continue to exist here and there, at the present time they are conducted only by isolated individuals of the older generation. Many elements existing earlier in the ceremonies have disappeared, for example, the carrying of the whaleboat to the shore before the beginning of hunting, the offering of dogs in sacrifice

(Ed. note: Due to their unusual length in both cases, footnotes appear at the close of this and the article which follows.)

to the "spirits", and many others. The shamans have ceased their activity. Ceremonies have thus lost their fundamental significance even in those Eskimo families which by tradition still conduct them.

These materials on Eskimo ceremonies and rites were collected by the author [i.e., I. K. Voblov] in 1934-36 with the active help of the Eskimo—primary teachers of the Chukotsky regional seven-year school of the Chukotsky Cultural Station<sup>2</sup> of Lawrence Bay, checked and made more exact in the Eskimo villages of Chaplino and Serenek.<sup>3</sup>

### The Rite Atigak

(The First Launching of the Boat on the Ice, or the ceremony of the beginning of hunting. It occurs on several different days at the end of May or the beginning of June.)

Early in the morning, when only the first rays of the cold northern sun are awake, the Eskimo begin preparation for the ceremony. The owner of the whaleboat (or baidara) together with a group of hunters carries the boat to the shore.<sup>4</sup>

In the house the wife cooks reindeer meat and flat cakes baked from flour (*kakak*), and prepares different roots, grasses, and other foods.

Having finished the preparation, all the members of the family set about painting their faces. With black dye from stone (graphite) or with soot from the blubber lamp, the men and women draw lines along both sides of their noses, under their eyes, to the end of their lower lips, and a few lines on their chins—to the lower part of the lower lip. The particular pattern of the lines on the face depends on which sea animal "will bring good fortune" to the given family—walrus, seal, mukluk seal, whale, killer whale, etc., (in this particular case, the family painted their faces for the walrus). After this all members of the family don white ceremonial rain clothing.<sup>5</sup> With reindeer sinew the wife fastens some long reindeer hair to the hood of her parka (the long hair from under the neck of the reindeer—which is a sign of good fortune in the home). Having finished dressing, the head of the family takes the special stick with which he strikes his drum only on ceremonial days, a shallow wooden cup filled with the best foods—boiled reindeer meat and grass *kubukhsi* (this grass was saved until the ceremony in a seal skin "poke" along with seal blubber), and he sets out with his wife toward the place where the whaleboat or baidara had been taken that morning. Following him only the old men and women of that particular settlement and nearby villages go to the shore, if they are present at that time. As a rule these participants in the ceremony are the near and distant kin of the owner of the whaleboat and his wife. Reaching the boat, the celebrant places down in its bottom the cup with the food which he has brought, takes a piece of meat from it, and puts the latter on the seat of the whaleboat and slices it into small pieces. Some of the pieces he sticks to the bow

of the whaleboat on the inside in such a fashion that birds cannot reach them. The remaining pieces he throws into the air and sea. Into the air—to feed the spirit Kiakhnik; into the sea—to feed “the mistress of sea animals”.

Having finished the “feeding” of the gods, the celebrant sets about making the sacrificial gifts. If he has sufficient dogs, he kills one of these and distributes the meat to the sea and air. If his dogs are few, then he “slaughters a dog” made of grass.<sup>6</sup>

While the celebrant feeds the gods, his wife makes a bonfire near the whaleboat. The celebrant throws the pieces of meat into the fire—“feeding the god”—the keeper of the fire. Having finished the feeding ceremony, the celebrant and his wife with the remaining food entertain the old men and women who had been patiently awaiting the end of the ceremony.

Everybody returns to the living quarters, where the celebrant continues to entertain those present with all the things that had been prepared for the ceremony. The celebrant then throws out into the sea or onto the earth all that remains—let the gods not think that he is keeping anything from them. He fed them before feeding the people, and the remaining food he also is returning to them.

At this the ceremony comes to a close. It has lasted nearly two hours.

After the ritual, if the weather on the sea is fair, that is, with no storms, the celebrant together with his crew goes out hunting seals. Only after the ceremony can one begin hunting in the early spring. Not having fed all the spirits, to go out onto the sea is impossible—the gods are offended and do not wish for good luck. The spirits would drive away all the sea animals from the “evil” hunter who departs from the established rule.

There are several whaleboats and baidaras in the villages. But it is possible to celebrate only in proper turn—together only one whaleboat owner each day.

### The Rite *Naskunikkilik*

(The Ceremony of the Tusks. Conducted on various days in June. In this period walrus hunting far from the shore comes to an end, because storms are beginning.)

Long before the approach of the ceremony the celebrant sets about preparing reindeer meat, dried ducks, fish, sugar, tobacco, edible grasses and roots (*kubukhsi*, *suklak*), inner reindeer fat in a poke, and from 1 to 100 walrus heads, that is, as many walruses as were killed during the hunting season.

Before the day of the ceremony, one or another of the family members gathers sea cabbage (“tear cabbage”)<sup>7</sup> from the shore. At

daybreak on the day of the ceremony, members of the family dress themselves and paint their faces in the same way as in the ceremony *Atigak*. For 1-2 days before the beginning of the ritual, a ceremonial pole some 5 meters in length is fastened to the back wall of the house.

At dawn, the celebrant leaves the house in festival clothing. Solemnly he goes around the house (moving with the sun) to the place where the pole stands. Carefully he takes it, returns to the house and stands the pole in the center of the living room in such a fashion that one end of it sticks out through the junction of poles which compose the inner roof of the house. With the fixing of the pole the ceremony begins. Regretfully, the author was not able to establish the symbolism of this ceremonial pole.

The celebrant then takes a ceremonial wooden dipper and rattle, and together with his wife or son sets off toward the sea shore. There he scoops up water into the dipper and in his outstretched hands he solemnly takes it home. He pours the water into the inner corners of the entrances to the house<sup>8</sup> and in a strict pattern together with all the members of his family he spreads out on the floor all the things that had been stored away for the ceremony.

Near the pole they place the special ceremonial blubber lamp, burning along both sides. From one side of the pole in a half-circle are put the walrus heads (until the time of the ceremony no one must touch them), and on the heads they place pieces of walrus liver. From each side of the pole in a half circle are placed ducks, fish, and sea cabbage. In the space between the heads and the cabbage (on the bed-curtain side of the living quarters) they put the grass (*kubukhsi*), mixed with blood and fat from sea mammals, edible roots, tobacco, sugar, flat cakes or hardtack, and reindeer meat. Such an arrangement of foodstuffs is dictated by the way the food was procured: all that is gotten from the sea is placed on one side, and all that is taken from the land on the other.

Then the celebrant closes the doors, so that dogs cannot enter the house. He takes his drum, and, striking it, begins to sing. At the end of the song (a wordless song<sup>9</sup>) he shouts out strongly and slowly: "Go-go-go-go-go!"<sup>10</sup>

The final shouts of the celebrant simultaneously serves as a signal for the neighbors (relatives), who after a while come as guests. The celebrant hands the drum to the first arrival (a relative). The guest sings, accompanying himself on the drum. All the other guests, in order of their arrival, perform in the same way as the first had done. The guests also sing without words, mentally "helping the celebrant call together the good spirits" and wishing good fortune for the home.

During the time of the guests' songs the celebrant still is shouting, "Ogo-go-go-go!" but with greater strength than the first time. This shout is a signal of invitation for the shaman, who immediately appears.



The shaman takes the drum from the celebrant and, striking it, slowly begins a song. At first he sings without words, but in meditation he is inviting his own spirits into the house.<sup>11</sup>

Into the house "come the spirits". They enter the shaman, and he "turns himself into the spirit". Now the shaman during his singing points out to the celebrant how long life will follow him: he says that perhaps the celebrant will be a fine hunter and kill a whale; but on the other hand perhaps this will not be. Even worse, maybe the hunter will find himself in misfortune and tragedy. "I do not believe," says (sings) the shaman, "that this will happen to you, because just now several spirits have come to me, both good and evil. They tell me of many things."

At the end of his singing the shaman says, "So that no misfortune will come to your house, kill a dog and distribute the meat to the spirits of the air." After the shaman's departure, the guests with the drum sing silently to themselves, wishing good hunting and good fortune at home for the celebrant. Having finished the singing, all the guests turn to look at the celebrant. He solemnly goes up to one of the walrus heads and places his foot on it ("so that no one will be sick"). Then he cuts off pieces from all the things that are lying around the pole, places them in the wooden ceremonial dipper and sets out with his wife or son to the sea shore. There he throws them into the sea and into the air with these words: "Here gather and take of this." He returns home, a second time cuts pieces from the food, places these in the dipper, takes the rattle and goes around the house from the east to the west. He goes to the place where until the ceremony the pole had been standing, pauses, and throws pieces to several sides. He lifts the dipper in the direction of the sunrise and shouts slowly and loudly: "Ogo-go-go-go-go!" He returns to the house again according to the direction of the sun's movement. (During the ceremony, the celebrant had invited unto himself the mightiest of spirits—the spirit of the sun, giver of warmth, light and life.)

At this time his wife builds a bonfire near the ceremonial pole. The celebrant for the third time cuts pieces from all the food and throws them into the fire with these words: "Gather here all of you (spirits) and partake of this."

Having finished feeding the spirits of the fire, he takes the fire on a flat piece of iron or steel (formerly on a wide bone from a sea mammal) and slowly moves toward the door, where he instantly hurls it out into the street. At that moment all those present at the ceremony pound on the walls and shout: "Now let there be no evil spirits, now will here be no sickness." (During the time that the celebrant, the guests, and the shaman had been singing, and also during the feeding of the spirits in the house, the "evil spirits", who can bring sickness and misfortune, and come in together with the "good spirits". Because of this it was necessary to drive them out.)

After the banishing of the evil spirits from the house, the celebrant entertains all those present.

The old women from neighboring houses, among whom are a number of relatives of the celebrant and his wife, had come with large empty bowls. They give these to the eldest of all the old women. She equally divides the ceremonial treats, except for the walrus heads.

At the same time the ceremonial dancing is beginning in the house. Having received their gifts, the old people who wish to do so remain to see the dancing. Others go home. The dance goes on to the accompaniment of the drum (either one or several instruments) and the shouts of the audience.<sup>12</sup> The official part of the ceremony begins with the end of the dances. The celebrant starts to act upon the shaman's orders—he kills a dog and “scatters” the meat to the spirits. Then the walrus heads are carried out into the street, the meat is cut off from them, and the bones are smashed with a mattock (formerly they were broken with stones). The celebrant himself then keeps the walrus tusks.<sup>13</sup> The brains and meat are divided among the celebrant and the crew hunting in his whaleboat.

Upon completion of this act of sharing, the celebrant brings the ceremonial pole out of the house and places it in the ground on the rear side of the structure. After a few days a reindeer skin is tied to the pole with reindeer sinew and it is stood in its usual place. Now it is possible to begin hunting close to the shore for walruses, mukluk seals, and seals.

#### The Rite Akhisakhmuk

(Feeding the Dead. Carried out on various dates in September or the beginning of October.)

The ceremony coincides with the end of bartering between the Eskimo and the nomadic Chuckchi. To the Chuckchi the Eskimo take sea mammal fat for blubber lamps, mukluk seal skins for summer boots, walrus skins for thongs, ready-made boots sewn from skins of maritime animals, tea, sugar, cartridges, rain clothing sewn from intestines of sea animals, and other things. In return they receive from the Chuckchi reindeer meat, reindeer skins for sleeping bags and winter clothing, insoles for winter boots, reindeer sinews for thread, and other things.

Upon returning from the barter, the Eskimo set about the “feeding” of their deceased relatives. Early in the morning they boil reindeer meat. They put pieces of boiled meat in the cup (of wood or iron) which has been mentioned before. In it already they had placed dried fish. Thus, for the “feeding” of the dead the main nourishing foods are used. All this they roll up in a rain parka, tie it with straps into a sort of rucksack, put it on their back, and set off for the burial ground. This is found a short distance from the settlement (not over 1 km.). It is a cemetery in our terms but not in the Eskimo's, for

because of the eternally frozen ground, the Eskimo (as well as the Chuckchi) cannot bury their dead in a grave. They place the corpse on the surface of the ground, sometimes covering it with stones. In any case, at its head is always placed a large stone in order that the body can easily be distinguished and as a symbol of longevity. Sometimes the bones of the dead people are kept intact by this device; other times not, but the stone is invariably found in the same place. At the time of the ceremony, the celebrants remove the stone ("grave stone") and in its place they build a fire. They cut small pieces from the meat and fish which have been brought, and on the gravestone they cut these into even smaller pieces and throw them into the fire. At that point, the person who throws the food into the fire intones: "Gather here all (spirits), here take of food."

Having finished the feeding of spirits, all those present begin their meal. All that was brought by them from the house is eaten.<sup>14</sup> They throw the reindeer bones into the fire. The oldest relative of the dead people (father, grandfather, etc.) stands on one side of the fire, and all the other people stand on the other. The oldest one takes dead coals from the fire and with them daubs each one present with these words: "Now all sickness will leave here." The gravestone is put in its former place and everybody returns home. Before leaving the burial ground everyone must take away with him his shade or ghost.<sup>15</sup> The shade is able to appear in the form of a blade of grass, a thin wand, or a stone. Everybody "takes his own shade" from the cemetery to the living room and there throws it out. Then there is no longer any danger. The living people never stay in the cemetery by themselves. All go home—both the man and his shade.

With the return home, the ceremony of "Feeding the Dead" ends.

#### The Rite *Attigak*

(In Preparation for Whale Hunting. It occurs on a number of days of November and lasts from one to two hours.)

Long before the ceremony (i.e., at the end of the previous year's whale hunting), the Eskimo store up pieces of meat from various parts of the body of the whale—from the nose, navel, fins, and tail. All these pieces are fastened to a thong beginning with the tail pieces, then those of the navel, fins, and head. Above the head is tied a small bag sewn of walrus skin in which the "food" for the whale is saved. In this fashion, it is assumed that the entire whale is thereby tied to the thong.

For the ceremony the following foods are prepared: reindeer meat, roots, grasses, sugar, tobacco, and others.

Early in the morning the celebrant (i.e., the owner of the whaleboat) together with his crew paints a silhouette of a whale on the sides of the boat. Into the whaleboat they put the hunting equipment—harpoons, whalebun, Winchester<sup>16</sup> and other things, and they carry the whaleboat to the shore.

Everybody then returns to the settlement. The celebrant dresses in a white rain parka, and paints his face in imitation of the whale (by drawing a few lines on his cheek and chin). Then the other members of his family also do this. They then pick up the food that had been prepared and everybody carries it to the whaleboat on the shore. Following that, they go around the whaleboat in the direction of the sun and stop on the side which faces the sea.

At the shore, all the old men and women of the village gather at the place where the ceremony is being held. The celebrant and his wife lift up into the air the dishes with the foods that had been brought and in a whisper they invite the spirits of the sea "to exchange" a whale for this food. Having finished "the exchange", the celebrant with his wife go nearer the water. Here he "kills a dog" which had been fashioned out of grass (or kills a real dog if he has enough of them) and throws the clotted blood into the sea. He also throws into the sea pieces from all the foods that had been brought.

Having finished the "feeding" of the spirits of the sea, the celebrant returns to the whaleboat, cuts off pieces of reindeer meat, and with these rubs the outside of the bow of the boat (representing by this an exchange of reindeer for whale). On the inside of the whaleboat he sticks pieces of meat in order to call into the boat the master of the sea—the whale.

Then the celebrant proceeds to the main part of the ceremony—"the feeding" of the whale. With the meat he rubs each part of the whale that is tied to the thong, and into the small bag he puts pieces of meat so that the whale can "feed himself" at any time.

On that the ceremony ends. The food that was brought is given out to the old men and women, and everybody eats there. Except for the celebrant, all return to the village. At this time hunters from the village (the whaleboat crew) immediately go to the shore and set out on the sea after whales. Usually the ceremony occurs in fine weather, when it is possible to begin a hunt at once.

### The Rite *Sayak*

("All is open, all is free, take everything." It is carried on at the end of December or the beginning of January.)

With the approach of the ceremony the family which is organizing the rite conducts a general cleaning of the living quarter—i.e., the sleeping room and the entry-way. At this time, neighbors (near and distant relatives) are preparing from wood a few paddles 10-20 centimeters in length, and four imitation ducks. On the small paddles they paint silhouettes of various sea animals and fur animals of the tundra. The celebrant ties one end of a thong to the upper ends of the poles of the frame of the house. The other end he ties to the entrance of the house. On the thong he fastens the paddles and

imitation birds. In the middle of the room two blubber lamps have been placed, one on top of the other. The celebrant puts the ceremonial pole in front of these. The pole is put in the same place as in the ceremony *Naskunikhkilik*. The ceremony begins with the approach of twilight. The celebrant sings his ritual song to the beating of the drum and shouts in imitation of the quacking of a duck. His son or daughter goes out to invite the guests—only women.<sup>17</sup> Each woman brings reindeer meat, sugar, and other foods with her on a platter. The platters with their foods are placed near the wall of the house. Then the young women go to the center of the room and make a circle around the ceremonial pole. (There will be from two to four such circles—depending on the number of women.) The celebrant takes his drum, rhythmically beats it and abruptly sings out. The women dance to this accompaniment with free-flowing gestures. Standing in place, with smooth movement of the head, arm, and body the women portray this or that aspect of women's domestic work (skinning seals, sewing clothing, etc.).

At the end of the dance the women give all the foods they have brought to the celebrant. In his turn the celebrant gives each woman a small slice of reindeer meat mixed with reindeer fat. Then the celebrant and his wife each take a paddle and stand alongside the entrance to the house. Some of the attending guest-relatives go out of the house one by one. Near the leg of each person leaving, the celebrant with his wife "paddle" (in the air) with the paddles, depicting by this his own paddling in the baidara at the time of the exchange (with the Chuckchis).

The son of the celebrant unfastens the end of the ceremonial thong from the door, from which are hanging the paddles and birds. His wife sits down near the bed platform, and the celebrant takes his drum and, striking it, sings his own ceremonial song about how successfully he will trade with other people. At that time the son lowers and raises the ceremonial thong with the amulets as if demonstrating that it is intended for the exchange.

With the finishing of the celebrant's singing, the guests leave. The celebrant and his wife go to the bed platform to sleep, but their children stay in the outer room to guard the burning of the blubber lamp. In watching the flame all of the neighbors wishing to may take part, young boys and girls, who are relatives of the celebrant and his wife. The flame of the blubber lamp burns from the beginning until the end of the ritual, and all those guarding it are forbidden to sleep.

Early in the morning, when the celebrant wakes up, his son brings to him the ceremonial stick used for striking the drum and they set out to call the guest-relatives together. Going up to each house, the celebrant knocks the stick on the side where the entrance is and shouts: "Ogo-go-go-go-go-go! *Agnagat uzubnakut*" 'the girl is going to circle around.'

Having invited the neighbors, the son and the rest of those with him who guarded the flame begin to sleep. They sleep until evening. The women come together quickly, stand as they had the preceding evening (around the pole) and dance to the beating of the drum and the shouting of the celebrant. Now the dance takes on a different character. The dancers move sideways in a circle and rhythmically stamp one foot after another. The old women go into the middle of the dances in the house. They bring empty trenchers with them, and sit on the floor to await the end of the dancing. The dances last a long time, and require great physical strength and endurance, in order that one will not bring shame upon himself through leaving the circle before the end of the dance.<sup>18</sup> When, however, one or another of the dancers quits out of strength and falls, the celebrant stops beating the drum and cries: "Ogo-go-go-go-go!" (He "scares away" the evil spirit of death from the fallen person.)

The collapsing women slump to the floor, and it is thought that their "shade" then crawls away from the circle of dancers toward the wall. During the time when the celebrant is singing to the fallen dancers, the dance itself does not stop and the dancers must not rest. When the next one leaves the dance, the celebrant stops beating the drum momentarily, shouts, and then returns to the accompaniment.

With the ending of the dances the celebrant puts boiled reindeer meat into the trenchers of the old women. After that all the guests leave.

During the day, without invitation old men and women (relatives) gather in the celebrant's sleeping quarter. The celebrant's wife entertains all those who have come with the food that was prepared for the ceremony.

In the evening the celebrant's children go to the houses of neighbors and invite them with these words: "Are you not going to take food with us?"

They treat the assembling guests to boiled reindeer meat, *kanal-khinom*<sup>19</sup>, frozen fish, and soured grass.

Having eaten, the guests in turn each sing their own song, a song of their family, of their ancestors, of the strength and courage of their family, of aspects of work, and other things.

The guests leave, and the celebrant and his wife lie down to sleep, but the children once again stay in the outer room to watch the flame until morning. At daybreak the children set out to invite the guests. This time they invite only young boys. Together with the young lads come old women with empty platters. The boys do the same type of dance as did the girls. At the end of the dance, the youths leave the house. The celebrant distributes *kubukhsi* (soured grass) to the old women, and they leave. In the daytime the celebrant gathers together guests of both sexes, and invites all of them to have of his food.

In the evening all the young girls and boys who had taken part in the dances gather in the house of the celebrant. Each of these by turn sings the song of his own family (either the maternal or paternal line). Then once again all leave, the celebrant and his wife lie down to sleep, and the children remain to guard the flame.

At night, the celebrant, his wife and all adults who are resting in the sleeping room go out into the outer room and don white rain parkas. On his face each member of the family has one black line under his left eye, which he wears until the end of the ceremony.

The celebrant's wife and his daughter take a real paddle and seat themselves on the *akita*<sup>20</sup>.

The son takes the end of the strap on which were tied the amulets (paddles, birds). To the accompaniment of the drum, the father sets the tune for a ceremonial song about the forthcoming happy exchange. All sing together, while the son lowers and raises the strap in time. After a short pause, all the family sing the same song, but without the drum and in a casual way. Then everybody sits down in a semi-circle near the bed platform. The celebrant calls out the name of one of the family members present, for example Oomkaooge. All others take it up: "Oomkaooge went away with sickness." The celebrant calls a second name, for example Taleko. Everybody joins in: "Taleko went away with sickness." And so on, until all members of the family are named. At the same time as someone's name is being pronounced, everybody points to the door with their hands and clicks their tongue.

Having conducted out these people from those present, the participants then set about the "welcoming back" of the same individuals. All together they ask: "Who is coming? Probably Oomkaooge?" and then everybody sneezes at the same time, as if thus to confirm the answer to their question. They repeat this until the last person enters from among those who are present.

With the end of this process of "removing sickness" the guests (the near relatives of the wife and husband) come into the house and seat themselves around the outer room. The celebrant cuts a piece of meat from the lips of a seal (the soft part without hair), slices it into small pieces and gives them out to each person in the house. The guests are sitting in a circle. Each one holds the meat in the right hand. Rhythmically everyone simulates throwing the meat to the ground and then putting it in his mouth with these words: "I would chew, I would chew, I would chew." First they lift their hands upwards and then lower them in the direction of the earth, crying out as they do this, "The seals gave." The next time they call out another maritime animal (mukluk seal, sea lion, walrus and others). But they do not name all the animals. Having named a particular animal, everyone takes the meat into his mouth and quickly swallows it. Everybody stands up, puts his hands on his head and says: "Whither



do I reach? I reach the top." He lowers his hands to his shoulders and utters: "Whither do I reach? I reach to the shoulders." Then he lowers his hands to the thighs, knees, heels, to the big toe of the foot and utters the same question and answer.

Just as the last question and answer are being said, everybody begins to jump up to get the paddles tied to the thong. Each one tries to pull down as large a paddle as possible. By this time the thong is tied very high, and much effort is required for a person to get the paddles which are tied to it.<sup>21</sup>

The celebrant takes the paddles and birds himself and carries them into the street. Against the north wall of the house stands a small wooden tripod and he ties the birds (the ducks) and paddles to it. He returns to the house, takes one of the blubber lamps and extinguishes it. By this time the house is filled with guests (neighbors). In the space between the walls of the sleeping platform and the wall of the house (this space is usually used as a storeroom) sit four men. One of them has a drum. They sing one of the common songs, not concerned with the ceremony. The celebrant takes some one or another skin or fur, arctic fox, mukluk seal, seal, or another kind, places it at his feet and begins to dance near it, by his movements praising his piece of goods. During the dance all the guests join in with singing and rhythmical shouting.

Having finished the dance, the celebrant takes from the floor the article near which he had danced, puts it at the feet of the man with whom he wishes to exchange, and returns to his former place.

The article having been received from the celebrant, the exchange partner takes it and leaves for home. He returns with something for exchange, places it at his own feet and dances in the same manner as had done the celebrant. Upon finishing the dance he gives the article to the celebrant.

The general exchange then opens. Each one present in turn puts at his own feet an object, dances, and puts it at the feet of some other man present in the house with whom he wishes to exchange. The latter in his turn places an object at his own feet, dances near it, and gives it to whomever had given him the "merchandise". The exchange takes place without words and without any questions. But everybody who engages in the "trading" knows that he can exchange only things that are equivalent in their value. For example, for a skin of a mukluk seal—that of an arctic fox; for a bomb for a whalegun—the skin of a mukluk seal, etc.

The old women come into the house during the time of the exchange; they also wish to receive something from the person who is celebrating the ceremony. Near the ceremonial pole and blubber lamp lies the joint from a seal's fin—the "knucklebone"—which is placed there especially for the ritual. One of the old women takes the "knucklebone" and, turning to the celebrant, says "Here at these finger tips is your

reindeer meat" or, more generally, she names anything that can be given to her. The celebrant gives the old woman some meat. The remaining old women do the same thing, and after them the old men do likewise. The celebrant in his turn asks each old woman and old man what they have "at their finger tips", and they receive the things they name or else some food. This exchange is again conducted systematically according to fair principles of trade.

After the ending of the exchange, the celebrant gathers some ashes from the blubber lamp (in the blubber lamp moss burns in the place of a wick) and he goes to the entrance with it. Everybody observes his movements there. First touching the door, the celebrant then instantly throws the ashes into the street. At that time in the house incredible shouts and noises are raised. Everyone strikes anything that is handy and shouts: "Now we will be without evil spirits." The evil spirits in this manner are "thrown out" into the street along with the ashes.

The official part of the ceremony ends. The celebrant then boils a large amount of reindeer meat and invites guests into the sleeping quarter. In that room it is dark, and lighting a fire is not allowed, for to do so would make the evil spirits able to kill people. Therefore the guests eat the meat in the darkness. Then they sing songs, wishing for the celebrant's good fortune. In the sleeping quarter the shaman also is sitting. In his song he depicts the future life of the celebrant. However, his prophecies take the form of two contrasting statements: "Perhaps you will live well and will kill many animals . . . But perhaps you will live poorly and kill nothing."<sup>22</sup>

In the dark of night the shaman and guests leave.

After three days have elapsed, early in the morning the wife of the celebrant picks up the ceremonial lamps and takes them to the tripod, which during this time had been set up by the celebrant at the northern corner of the house. She takes all these things far from the house and then, accompanied by the beating of the drum and by songs about the good fortune with which the ceremony came to an end, she burns the tripod, the blubber lamp, the birds, and the paddles in a fire.

Now the last of the "remaining evil spirits", "who had come in with these objects, is destroyed. The evil spirits have been "driven out" by the ceremony, for with the beginning of the ritual in the celebrant's house the evil spirits had "lodged" themselves in the room. Periodically people "chase" them from the house, and now the structure is finally freed from them.

In the ritual *sayak* the primitive form of food exchange is strikingly evident. Among the Eskimo and Chuckchi this pattern of exchange is not limited to ceremonies. It has a place in the whole way of life. Individual Chuckchi and Eskimo families continued to carry on this

exchange with the nomadic Chuckchi right up to 1936. However, that exchange was not accompanied by the ceremonialism described in the ritual *Sayak*.

### The Rite *Kamygtak*

("The Boots." It is held on various days of January.)

For this ceremony *prara*<sup>23</sup> and the same foods as in the rest of the rituals are prepared.

In the center of the outer room are placed the blubber lamp, seal fat, and moss. In the depth of night all the family enters the outer room from the sleeping quarter. All the dogs are driven from the outer room into the street. The celebrant's son stands at the entrance to the house and guards against the dogs' returning to the living quarters.

The celebrant ties a strap to the central junction formed by the outside poles of the frame of the house, and to that strap he ties a wooden whale.<sup>24</sup> The celebrant's wife pours oil into the blubber lamp, sets the moss wick, and kindles it along the two opposite sides. Having finished these preparations, the family members don white ceremonial rain parkas and paint their faces. After he has finished dressing, the celebrant takes a rattle and goes out into the street. He moves around the house against the direction of the sun, comes to a stop halfway, and shouts: "Right now we will hold a great ceremony." Addressing the "spirits of the ceremony", he commands: "Come unto us." He then returns to the house, takes his drum and, beating it, goes around in a circle inside the house, shouting while he does so: "Ogo-go-go-go-go!"

The women during this time have been singing to the accompaniment of the drum. Those who are unable to sing are required to leave, following the celebrant out of the house. Also, the men who are in the house must leave after the celebrant. At this time in the house the guests are gathering (the distant and close relatives of the giver of the ceremony). Having made a few turns around the house, the celebrant then makes his way toward the entrance and more intensely beats the drum, concluding in that way the cleaning out of evil spirits from the bed platform. At this time the celebrant's wife is standing between the blubber lamp and the bed platform and performs the dance "Hunting the Whale". With smooth movements of the arms, she simulates paddling first on one side, then on the other. "Floating" on the sea, she peers into the distance and "sees" a whale. Drawing nearer the whale, she "throws a harpoon into it".<sup>25</sup>

Having finished the dance, she sits down, and her husband puts a plate near the ceremonial blubber lamp and ties a piece of reindeer sinew to the hanging strap which was fastened to the pole at the beginning of the ritual. Each guest (relative) also ties a piece of reindeer sinew to the strap. Then the celebrant takes out a pair of boots from the bed platform (which, as a rule, must be new) and places them on the platter.

The celebrant's wife takes the platter with the boots, carries it around the blubber lamp, stops, and places it on the floor. Her husband stands at the wall opposite the blubber lamp. As a rule, the ceremonial lamp and strap on which is tied the "whale" are located between the man and the woman. All the guests are seated at that time. With smooth movements of his arms the celebrant draws to himself the "whale" and tosses it in the direction of his wife. She catches the whale and in the same manner throws it back to him. The man then catches the object and puts it in a resting position. Then the man and his wife change places. The wife takes with her the platter with the boots. They repeat the scene of tossing the whale back and forth. The celebrant and his wife then yield their places to the spouses of a number of their guests (relatives). The latter people perform in the same way as those who are holding the ceremony. Having finished with the "hunting" of the whale, the celebrant then sends some of his own children and young people from those who are present to get the old men and old women. The celebrant accompanies the sending of these messengers with the cry: "Ogo-go-go-go, to the boots, to the boots!" The holders of the ceremony greet the guests with a song and beat on the drum. When all the old men have gathered together, the proprietors treat them to everything that had been prepared for the ceremony, and give them tea to drink. At supper by turns the old men tell of the by-gones of their own life and the life of their ancestors or of events seen or heard by them and their ancestors (and consequently, also the ancestors of the holders of the ceremony). During the time when the old men are telling their tales the shaman comes into the house. The celebrant gives him his own drum and asks for a song from him. The shaman calmly and slowly sings a song which the wife of the celebrant knows<sup>26</sup>, and she sings together with the shaman. If, during the time of the singing, the shaman's mouth has grown dry, he interrupts the song and says to the proprietor: "Surely there will be misfortune in your house." If, however, on the contrary, a good deal of saliva has gathered, which for quite obvious reasons very seldom happens during the singing, then he declares: "Surely you will kill a seal or a mukluk seal, and perhaps a walrus." Then the shaman tells the celebrant that "on the ceremonial platter somebody brought sickness into your house; therefore the ritual is going badly." At that point the shaman points out one of the guests' platters<sup>27</sup> and proposes to the celebrant that he rub it with the "stone spirit" (graphite)<sup>28</sup>. This means that the guest is "evil" and has brought sickness to the ceremony, even though that guest may be a relative of the proprietor of the ceremony. With the coming of daybreak the younger guests leave. In the house remain only the old men and old women. The celebrant and his wife go from the bed platform into the hallway and with black stone (graphite) they draw lines on the guests' faces, "in order that all may be without sickness." The celebrant cuts off pieces from all the food that was prepared, places them in the ceremonial cup and together with his wife goes out into the street. He throws the pieces in various directions—"feeds the spirits"—and

returns inside the house. The celebrant divides equally among the guests all the food that had been prepared for the ritual.

Again the scene of the tossing of the whale, the singing, and the dances are repeated.

Upon the completion of the dances the guests (old men and old women) tell traditional stories about various happenings, tales and witty anecdotes<sup>29</sup>. This takes all day. At evening time the ceremony ends. It has lasted twenty-four hours.

#### The Rite *Kaziva*

(The "Winding Around." It is conducted at the end of January or the beginning of February.)

For this ceremony reindeer meat, roots, and other types of food are prepared. Four small whales and paddles are made, and on the real whaling paddles, men, the house, the whaleboat with hunters in it, the process of hunting the whale, or people catching young codfish with fishhooks are drawn with soot. Another scene depicted is the towing of the whale to the shore and cutting it up. On the remaining few paddles a group of people is painted.

The ceremonial pole is put through the central junction of the framework of the house (the smoke hole). As in the previous ceremony, up to this time it had been located behind the house. The bottom end of the pole is put in a hole made in a whalerib. The rib is already prepared for the ceremony and usually lies on the floor in the center of the hallway or outer room.

All members of the family dress in white rain parkas and paint their faces. One side of the face they smear (i.e., draw lines) with soot, the other, with black clay. Everybody sets off for the shore. There they take a small piece of sea ice and solemnly they return with it to the house. They place the ice near the ceremonial "whale" (i.e., the rib) and light the ritual blubber lamp. They wrap a strap around all the poles of the framework of the house and make it fast. Two small paddles and figurines of the whale are fastened to this strap. One of the paddles is tied to the ceremonial pole, and the remaining one (with the drawing), to the inner wall of the house. With reindeer sinew they tie reindeer hair to the large paddles, and in the blade of the paddle they drill two small holes.

Next, two cross-wise sticks are fastened to the ceremonial pole. Their ends are connected by a thong, on which is hung reindeer hair. This forms a square which surrounds the ceremonial pole. To each corner of the square are tied red ribbons, and to the ends of the ribbons are tied bundles of white dog hair. To the outside end of the ceremonial pole (sticking outside the house) are tied two small sticks parallel with each other. To one of them is tied the skin of a male arctic fox, to the other, that of a female arctic fox. To the very top of the

pole is tied a bundle which is pointed toward the side of the house at a sharp angle. To the corner of this "turnpike" arrangement are tied two ducks. To their heads are fastened red ribbons, and to the ends of the ribbons, white dog hair.<sup>30</sup> Near the bed platform they spread out boiled reindeer meat on a plate. Two women (relatives of the celebrant) take the largest paddles, sit down, and waving them from wall to wall, they sing a ceremonial song about their supposed good fortune in the forthcoming exchange. The celebrant then moves closer to them and strikes up his drum.

Having finished the singing, the wife cuts pieces of meat and "feeds" (rubs) all the amulets which are hanging from the straps, and into the bags which hang near the "whales" she puts the pieces of meat. Having come to the end of the "feeding" of the whales, the celebrant invites the guests (his near and distant kin) to the table and feasts them with everything that had been prepared for the ceremony. After eating, the guests can leave when they wish. Those remaining sing a few songs, then disperse for their homes. The celebrant and his wife lie down to sleep, but their children guard the fire until morning. (The flame is kept going until morning in the sleeping quarter, because it is cold in the outer room.) In the morning everybody goes out into the outer room and dresses in white rain parkas. The women take paddles, wave them and join in a song with the celebrant, who accompanies the singing on his drum. The children call the guests together (who again are relatives of the wife and husband). The guests who are gathering go up to the ceremonial pole and grasp it with their hands. The celebrant then strikes up a ritual song, rhythmically beating the drum. His wife joins in singing with him, but the guests twist around the pole in time with the song—to the right and then to the left, in a half-circle. After this the guests leave, but following a meal they once again return, and the scene with the movement about the pole is repeated. Again they leave for their homes, and in the evening once more they twist around the pole. The relatives then lie down to sleep and the children guard the lamp. On the following day all these patterns are repeated. In the evening the celebrant again entertains the guests with the ceremonial food, that is, all the things that had been prepared for the ritual. Once again the relatives lie down to sleep, and the children guard the flame.

In the morning the guests come again. They bring their own foods this time (meat, greens, and other types) and place them near the ceremonial pole. Everybody sings the ceremonial song. Then the guests "feed" all the amulets with their own food, even as the celebrant had "fed" them. The celebrant takes a piece of meat, puts it on a platter and takes it to the shore. There he throws the meat into the sea and cries out: "Ogo-go-go-go-go!" He then returns to the house and to the old people equally distributes the food that had been prepared for the rite. The guests who took part in the twising around the pole, i.e., the guest-relatives, perform a dance to the singing and the beating of the drum. Then the celebrant opens the exchange. The nature and

process of the exchange is analogous to the trading described in the rite *Sayak*. The exchange lasts 2-3 hours, after which the amulets and ceremonial pole are removed. The guests depart, and the ceremonial ends on that. It lasts three days. The ritual of *Kaziva* is a ritual of exchange, distinct in its form from the ceremony *Sayak*. The character of the rite *Kaziva* is different in the sense that in it a larger number of intricate details appear than in the *Sayak*, especially those regarding the raising of the ceremonial pole. Together with this, in the ceremony *Kaziva* are fairly clearly shown a number of related attitudes: the "feeding" of the whale and the other amulets is a matter of concern not only to the family meeting at the ceremony, but also to all the relatives of the man's and women's line. Between the two families, the rituals of *Sayak* and *Kaziva* form a bond of relationship, stretching long in time.

All the rites and ceremonies which have been described were organized not only by the owners of whaleboats, *baidaras*, but also by other types of Eskimo. However, the owners of whaleboats sponsored ceremonies on a larger scale and drew into participation in them a greater number of relatives and fellow villagers, since they had at their disposal more economic resources. The less well-provisioned Eskimo families conducted more modest ceremonies. If the settlement had several whaleboat owners, then they gave ceremonies for the people singly by turns.

The rites and ceremonies described were observed in two Eskimo villages—Chaplino and Serenek. A few are differently conducted from those in other Eskimo settlements, especially in Naukan and on [St.] Lawrence Island, but for the most part, they are all the same in theme—the struggle of man for existence.

#### Notes

(Unless otherwise indicated, all notes are from the original article.)

<sup>1</sup>The original Russian article appeared in *Sibirskii etnograficheskii sbornik, Akademiia nauk SSSR, Trudy instituta etnografii*. Novaia seria, Tom. XVIII, 1952, Moskva-Leningrad, pp. 320-334. I wish to thank Professor Richard Leed for his help in some problems of translation. (C.C.H.)

<sup>2</sup>"The 'kultbazy' or 'Cultural Stations' are political, cultural, and scientific research centres which the Soviet regime organized in the Far North. 'Cultural Stations' usually include a boarding school, a kindergarten, creches, a hospital, a first-aid post, a veterinary station, a meteorological station and even a museum. Most 'Cultural Stations' later developed into townships. Out of the fifteen 'Cultural Stations' three were founded in the Far East, one for the Koryaks, one for the Lamuts and the third for Chuckchi and Eskimos." Walter Kolarz, *The Peoples of the Soviet Far East*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954, p. 76. (Note added by C.C.H.)

<sup>3</sup>The material on Eskimo rites and ceremonies is only part of the material collected by the author (I. K. Voblov) on the life and customs of the Asiatic Eskimo. For convenience in the description of rites and ceremonies, throughout the account the present tense will be used.



4This is the group of permanent hunters in a whaleboat belonging to one owner. Relatives of the owner usually comprise the group.

5Kamleika, sewn from the intestines of maritime animals.

6A dog is the Eskimo's wealth, his companion and helper in work. Even so, the Eskimo have few dogs and all this led to abandonment of the custom of sacrificing the animals.

7In its form this cabbage remotely resembles a tear drop. It has a nourishing property, containing a considerable percentage of iodine.

8It is as if the celebrant had brought into the house a part of the sea, and along with that, part of its animal life, representing in this fashion the desire for abundance and plenty in the home.

9During the ceremony in the living quarter, the celebrant mentally calls all the good spirits unto himself.

10This shout is uttered so that the good spirits will hear the celebrant's voice and will come to him.

11The good spirits of the shaman are stronger than those of the celebrant. The shaman's spirits come as if to reinforce the power of the celebrant's spirits and, consequently, to increase the chances of the latter's receiving the prosperity he is wishing for.

12The dances are creative forms in which are depicted a number of economic processes: hunting for animals or birds; cutting up and dividing animal carcasses on the shore or at sea (skinning them); treating and and preparing animal skins, etc.

13This custom came down from the past, but it gained special importance during the period of the development of Russian-American trade with the Chuckchi and Eskimo, i.e., when the traders began buying the tusks.

14It is implied by this that the dead person together with the living is taking part in the meal. But insofar as he cannot take food as the living people do (the dead do everything backwards by comparison with the behavior of living people—so says Eskimo superstition), then those at the burial ground rub the gravestone which contains the dead soul with pieces of their own food.

15According to Eskimo belief, living man exists in two forms—the man himself and his ghost or shade. The shade always follows the man. One cannot leave it behind at the cemetery, because then a man would perish.

16The whalegun and Winchester rifle made their appearance among the Eskimo only at the beginning of the 20th century.

17Relatives on the wife's side.

18Roughly these resemble the dances of the Eveni, Buryat-Mongoloids, and Yakuts. The Yakutsk people's dance *yekhor* sometimes lasts for several days. In the circle formed by the dancers people sometimes relieve others who, having gotten tired, are giving themselves a rest. The dancer sometimes rests a few hours, eats, drinks koumiss and once more joins the circle of dancers. The person who, more than anyone else, can hold out is considered the staunchest and most hardy.

19Frozen walrus meat.

20The wooden headrest of the sleeping platform.

21Unfortunately the author (I. K. Voblov) was not able to ascertain the rationale behind the attempt to get as large a paddle as possible. But one can surmise that by this is indicated the desire for future riches, i.e., the wish to have one's own whaleboat or baidara.

22As a general rule, the shaman does not make categorical statements in his "prophecies."

23Soured grass. This grass, which is stored from the summer, is put into a barrel and water is slowly poured in. In the summer the barrel stands near the house; in the winter, inside the house. In the ritual sour grass is mixed with seal fat in the same way that food is prepared. This dainty and wholesome dish has a high percentage of Vitamin C.

24This whale is skillfully made: to the wooden whale is tied a fin from whalebone, and to the head is reindeer hair, simulating the whale's spout.

25The woman's ceremonial performance in the dance "Hunting the Whale" and her active part in the rituals are obvious signs of the survival of matriachy among the Eskimo.

26The shaman sings a song of women's work, of processes of manufacturing women's boots, and sings one of the songs of the celebrant's wife.

27Usually the shaman chooses the platter of a man with whom he is displeased.

28The "stone spirit"—graphite—plays a "protective" role in the Eskimo way of life, such as in rites and ceremonies. It "guards" a man from the evil spirits and from the sickness brought by them. The lines drawn on the face during the ceremony have two objectives: one is the depiction of the sea animals which the particular family worships, and the second is the protection of the man from the evil spirits.

29Here is one of the characteristic anecdotes. An Eskimo woman came to one of the villages to visit a friend. At evening time she went into the house of another friend from her childhood, the Eskimo man Nootaoogia, whom she had not seen for twenty years. Entering Nootaoogia's hallway, Sanikak, as this woman was known, heard the voice of Nootaoogia coming from the bed platform. Nootaoogia was saying to somebody: "Today I am not going hunting— my nose put on my boots, my eyes put on my parka, and my feet, my cap. They are all working on the shore." Sanikak was frightened at this and did not dare go to Nootaoogia's bed platform. She quickly returned to the other friend and mysteriously reported: "That Nootaoogia must live a fine kind of life— there he sits on his bed and yet various parts of him are working on the shore!" The childhood friend began to laugh and reported to Sanikak that Nootaoogia had three sons with such names, and that in the evening they all had gone to the shore to cut up a walrus.

30Regrettably, the author (I. K. Voblov) was not able to establish the meaning of all these complicated procedures in the preparation for the ceremony.

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