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**The Skin Boats of Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska.** By Stephen R. Braund. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988. 141 pages. \$19.95 Cloth.

This study of a relatively recent technological adaptation is a welcome addition to the ethnographic literature on the Bering Sea Eskimos, in this case, the Yupik-speaking inhabitants of Saint Lawrence Island. The author traces in detail how their traditional flat-bottom, open skin boat, or *angyapik* (*umiak*), became modified by structural features which are chiefly derived from the wooden plank whaleboat first introduced into the area by white whalers in the 1860s. The result is the current round-bottom (bent-rib) *angyapik*, beautifully suited to the particular environment and cultural needs of the Saint Lawrence Islanders, especially those of Gambell, the community on the western tip of the island where Braund did most of his fieldwork.

While Braund's focus is on the boat's technology, he also provides the ecological, social, and historical context necessary for understanding why the new form of watercraft became so successful.

Saint Lawrence, the largest island in the Bering Sea, is 120 miles from mainland Alaska, but it lies a scant thirty-eight miles from the Siberian coast, where a small Eskimo population is closely linked to that of Saint Lawrence Island by language, kin ties, and culture. The island is also in the path of the annual migration of Pacific walrus, which for centuries have been a main food source for the islanders. In addition, it is well situated for bowhead whale hunting, the "chief glory" (page 21) of these and other marine hunters in the northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait.

The first bent-rib skin boats actually seem to have been built in the 1920s by the Inupiaq-speaking King Islanders of the Strait, but by the 1930s they were also being made on both Diomedes and on Saint Lawrence Island. Furthermore, these marvels of seaworthiness continue to be used right into the 1980s for walrus hunting, whaling, and traveling.

Why is this so? What are the advantages of the round-bottom over the earlier flat-bottom skin boat and of the white man's wooden whaleboat? After the nineteenth-century peak of white man's whaling, most native Saint Lawrence Island whaling cap-

tains bought wooden whaleboats from the departing commercial vessels. Some were still in use in the 1940s.

Braund tots up the advantages of the bent-rib over the flat-bottom skin boat: it is easier to construct, stronger, more seaworthy, and better adapted to an outboard motor (which can be sunk into a well); further, the exterior false keel makes it relatively easy to pull over ice or gravel beaches without damage to the skin covering. Its advantages over the wooden whaleboat include ease of construction and of repair to the skin cover, and lightness and ease of dragging over ice and beach because of the false keel. Furthermore, it still can be made largely of local raw material—driftwood and female walrus hide for the frame and covering, braided whale sinew and baby walrus line for the sewing and lashing—although most builders today prefer imported hardwood for the ribs and some other fittings, and also use nails and other hardware. The boat retains, however, its strong, flexible frame; since it has no single stress point, it has great resistance to punctures.

Braund makes much of the false keel (“keelson” of Bokstoce, Chapelle, and several other writers) which sandwiches the skin cover between the inner, real keel and the ice or beach. This feature is very important to the Gambell people, who may have to drag their boats half a mile or more over ice or gravel to reach the town. The earlier flat-bottom skin boats had to be moved on shore by means of two special short sleds, but because of the false keel, these sleds are not necessary for the bent-rib skin boat. Nor are the false keels cut up nearly so much as those on the earlier wooden whaleboat. Indeed, the difficulty in dragging the latter was a major factor in the abandonment of their use by the islanders.

Round-bottom skin boats do not sail quite as well as the wooden whaleboats, but far better than the flat-bottom skin boat, and, like the wooden whaleboat, they can be fitted with hinged masts. This means that when the hunters get close to their prey, they can turn off the motors they have used to travel for long distances over the open water and proceed very quietly by sail. Then, when they fold down the mast, they have ample room in the boat for the final action of harpooning or shooting the whales and walruses. The chief drawback to the present form of skin boat is that after twenty-four to thirty-six hours in the water, the wal-

rus hide covering becomes waterlogged and has to be dried. It also has to be replaced every two or three years.

Braund's text is straightforward, although sometimes repetitious, and it is enhanced with excellent diagrams and photographs. There are three useful appendices: a glossary of Siberian Yupik words pertaining to skin boats; a listing of the number of skin boat crews on Saint Lawrence Island between 1970 and 1980; a series of photographs taken in 1938, by Father Bernard R. Hubbard, of the building of a round-bottom skin boat on King Island. Braund's commentary and captions explain how the construction differs from that of Saint Lawrence Island boats, because the King Islanders have no beach but must launch and land their boats from rocky cliffs.

Most other recent publications on Eskimo skin boats—for example, those by E. Y. Arima or D. W. Zimmerly—concentrate on the kayak rather than the open boat or, if they treat the open boat, are not as detailed—for example, the classic work on all native North American boats by E. T. Adney and H. I. Chapelle, or the historic account of the canoe by K. G. Roberts and P. Shackleton. The publications of L. Ellana and S. Bogojavlensky stress the social and economic aspects of skin boat hunting in the Bering Sea and Strait, but do not give the kind of sharply focused historical and technological detail that Braund has provided so successfully.

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**Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620–1984.** By William S. Simmons. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986. 331 pages. \$35.00 Cloth. \$15.95 Paper.

Although decimated by disease and overrun by the force of European settlement, the Indian tribes of southern New England—the Massachusetts, Wampanoag, Mashpee, Gay Head, Narragansett, and Mohegan—have persisted in the area of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut for three centuries, and many of their descendants maintain Indian identities to the present day. In this volume, William Simmons gathers together folklore from each of these groups that dates from earlier European contact and