

As far as could be learned they believe in a supreme spirit who rules over the earth and sky, and some minor spirits who rule the tides and other changes in nature, with whom their Angekok has power to converse.

Of a future life they believed in a heaven and a hell, the former to be a place where those go who do not lie and are good. This place is southward where the sky and earth meet, where there is no snow, plenty to eat, and no work to be done. Hell is a place where the wicked go especially those who have told lies and have done wrong to their fellows. Here it is always snowing, is very cold, and those that go there have to work as they did upon this earth.

The Angekok is only a man or woman rather shrewder than their fellows who exhorts the spirits to do whatever the people want, for which service they are paid. They are treated with little or no deference by their people excepting at times when they are employed. An Angekok, who often tried to make me believe he was better than his people, was entrapped by the rising tide one day while gathering seaweed, and in spite of his influence with the spirits the tide continued to rise driving him back under a steep ice cliff, and being unable to scale it he perished miserably.

During my stay in the Strait they were never seen praying but Ugaluk who often saw us at our prayers when told to whom we were praying said his people did the same.

One of their most interesting and peculiar religious customs is the offering of food and other things to the spirits. By the graves of many of their dead were found scraps of food, tobacco, powder, shot and other articles and at first it was supposed that these were offered only to those who had died. To my surprise, however, a number of like articles were found upon the beacon we had built in the shape of a man. Still more surprising was the fact that when we found two cannons upon the shore near Cape Prince of Wales, that had undoubtedly been left by some of the early explorers, and standing them on end a quantity of bullets, shot, and other rubbish rolled out. On enquiry as to how this had got there I was informed it had been given as an offering to the spirits.