

# HISTORY

Figure 12 shows a typical Baffin Island kayak paddle in the collections of the National Museum of Man. It is 10' 11" (332.9 cm) long by 2½" (6.6 cm) wide. There is a carved section between the blades and the loom that has a groove carved around it for a drip ring such as is pictured in fig. 13.

Many different types of drip rings were made on East Arctic paddles. I have seen rings merely carved into the wood while a paddle from northern Baffin Island had a small bone pin about an inch long set into the paddle on the bottom side in the same plane as the blade. Another paddle used a piece of manila line instead of the protruding pin.

East Arctic paddles were used on relatively flat-bottom kayaks that were long, wide and very stable. They had a thick and deep cockpit coaming that had its forward edge raised several inches. For speed the paddle was used with fast deep strokes. For normal cruising, however, the paddle was kept relatively horizontal with the middle of the paddle shaft pivoting on the top front of the cockpit coaming. Not only was the paddle kept against the coaming during each stroke, it was also slid 8 to 10 inches back and forth along the coaming. Although this technique is not easy to master, once learned it enables low-energy paddling that is less tiring than supporting the whole weight of the paddle with the arms.

## Greenland Paddles

The normal Greenland paddle is not unlike the East Arctic model except it is shorter and more often found with bone edging on the blades. While bone tips are standard features, drip rings are not.

The paddles average just under 7' (210.9 cm) long by 3" (7.7

Figure 13: Drip ring of wrapped seal skin on East Arctic paddle



cm) wide. Greenland kayaks are narrow crank craft that need shorter paddles to maintain balance.

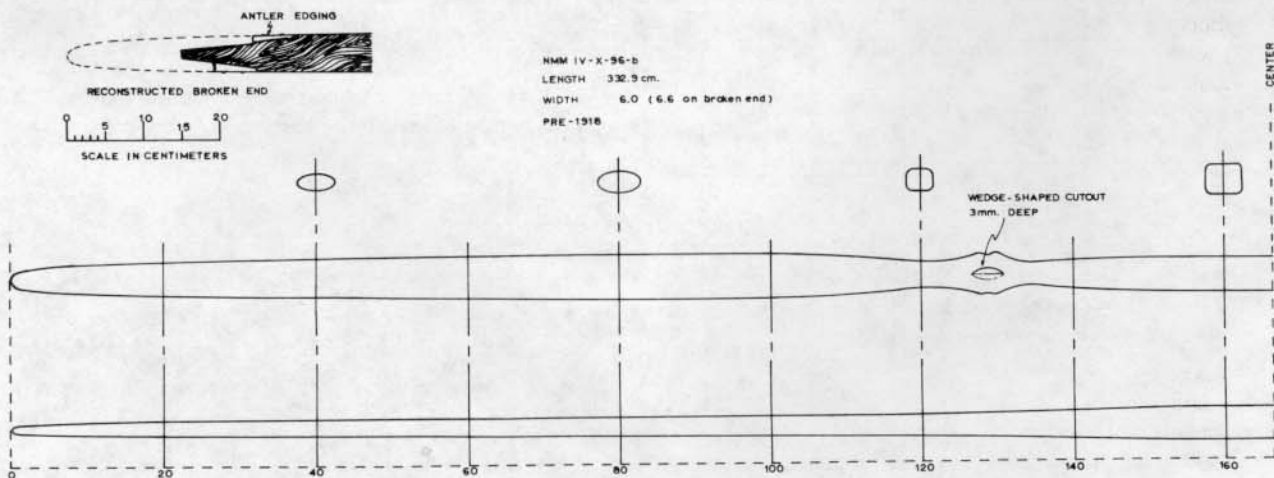
## Paddle Construction

Paddles were constructed by splitting out a plank from a driftwood tree and then rough-shaping it with an adz. After the availability of iron tools, the hatchet became the tool used for rough-shaping. Final shaping was done with the Eskimo curved carving knife, a tool dissimilar in both looks and use to the Indian crooked knife. Skillful use of the carving knife could produce a finished product that looked as though it had been planed and sanded smooth.

Figure 12: East Arctic Paddle

### Paddle Construction Notes:

1. There is a triangular cross section groove on both sides in the middle of the carved drip ring. The groove is 3mm deep, 7mm wide and about 4 cm long.
2. The center section is square with rounded edges.
3. The blade section is elliptical.



PADDLE OFFSETS																							
Stations in cm	1	3	5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	127.9	128.9	129.8	130	140	150	160	166.5
Half Breadths	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.5	1.8	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.5	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.3
Thickness	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.7	4.2	4.2	4.2