

HISTORY

control the kayak during the final approach toward a sleepy seal sunning himself on an icefloe. This strange paddle was grasped, as one would a walking stick, in one hand while the other held a harpoon at the ready. The paddle was maneuvered in a sculling motion without taking it out of the water. This prevented dripping water noises waking up the seal.

Aleut Paddles

The average Aleut double-bladed paddle has a length of about 8' (244.4 cm) with a width of just under 4" (9.4 cm). These paddles have long non-symmetric blades. Figure 4 illustrates a typical Aleut double-bladed paddle. The blade cross-section shows one side slightly convex, tending toward the flat, with the other side ridged the full length for strength. This paddle has red blades and a black shaft while others are decorated with black shaft and natural blades; red tip, black blade and red shaft with black ring around the middle; and red tips, blue blades and red shaft.

The Aleut were reported to also have single-bladed paddles (presumably as spares), but I have not seen any.

Pacific Eskimo Paddles

Alaska's Kodiak and Chugach Eskimo had similar kayaks and paddles. They normally used long, narrow, lance-shaped single-bladed paddles with symmetric blades. Kodiak paddle blades were invariably painted red and black with the shafts left natural. Chugach paddles sometimes had green blades.

Double-bladed paddles are found on models of Pacific Eskimo kayaks, but I have seen no full-sized ones. They were apparently used when great speed was wanted, as in hunting

the sea otter.

Figure 5 shows three typical Kodiak Eskimo paddles. They are in the collections of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad and were collected by Yury Lisiansky about 1805. The blades of all three are symmetrically ridged with edge thickness varying from about 1/8" (0.3 cm) at the tip to 1/8" - 1/4" (0.4 - 0.6 cm) at the sides extending almost to the loom.

Danish ethnographer Kaj Birket-Smith said that "the paddler was kneeling and took two or three strokes on one side, then

