Handbook of Eskimo Artifacts

The Inuit Art Section,
Room 911,
Department of Indian and
Northern Affairs Canada
Ottawa K1A 0H4

La Section de l'art Inuit
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OF

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ARTIFACTS

Northern Services,
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Summer, 1972.

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TO THE READER

If this material will rouse your curiosity or help identify objects attributed to be made by the "Eskimo" or as these fine people prefer to be called "Inuit"; then those responsible for putting it together will be satisfied.

Since this was not intended to be a scholarly endeavor but simply another aid for those puzzled about the items included here, errors undoubtedly will crop up. If you find any please let us know what they are and your source of information. Good Luck!

K. Crassweller,
Northern Services Division,
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development,
Centennial Tower, Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0H4,

Compiled by G. Henry
Researched by K. Crassweller

Text and sketches by *C. Russell, Lesley & Ken Crassweller* after;

Franz Boaz's The Central Eskimo, University of Nebraska Press.

Bill Durham's Canoes & Kayaks of Western America, Copper Canoe Press.

Otis Mason's The Ulu or Women's Knife, U.S.N.M., 1897
The Lamp of the Eskimo U.S.N.M., 1896

Mathaissen's Fifth Thule Expedition Report 1921-24, Vol. VI, No. 1.

INDEX ?

FOOD, HEAT, LIGHT

The oil Lamp — ESKIMO NAME ?

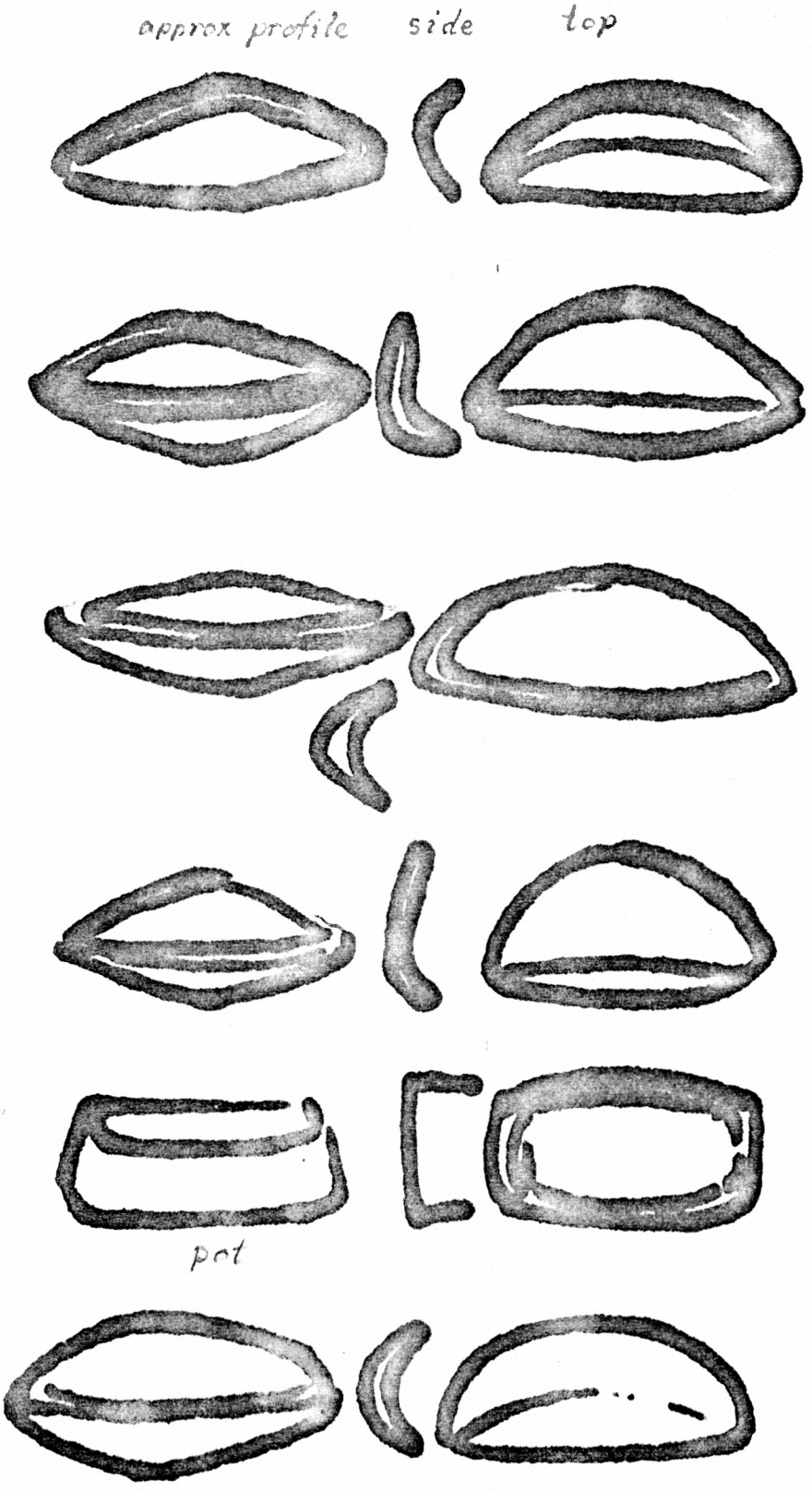
The oil lamp was essentially the woman's responsibility and hers as dictated by Eskimo social custom. Each maternal head had her own lamp which was kept burning day and night. "A woman without a lamp" was an expression to describe the most wretched among the Inuit. At death the lamp was placed at the woman's grave. The common feeling of companionship, security or sociability given by light was also appreciated by the Eskimo. A damaged lamp was not destroyed but repaired in an ingenious manner with the cement made of blood, clay and dog hair. Lamps came in all sizes and shapes, but had in common the basic components of all oil lamps used by the people, a slab of stone, piece of fat, and some moss for a wick. Seal oil was preferred, but any animal fat was used. A support was placed under the lamp to prevent the lamp sinking into the snow, getting out of level, and prevent the loss of heat conducted from the stone.

Pegs of wood, pieces of bone stuck in the snow or a wooden block hollowed out, or a block of wood with three legs formed the stand. Oil was placed in a shallow reservoir and the supply was kept up by suspending a piece of blubber near the flame. Fat nearly always required some preparation before being put into the lamp. Blubber was beaten to break up the fat globule allowing oil to come out as soon as it melted. The oil was allowed to stand level with the lower edge of the wick. The wick was made by rolling sphagnum moss, or willow catskins, or peat between the palms with some fat. The line of the wick was applied in an even ridge along the straight edge of the lamp two to thirty inches. The care of the wick was very important. The wick had to be dense or it would smoke. It was kept in order with a "trimmer", a small piece of bone, stone or wood. The trimmer was dipped in oil. The flame was lighted at one end and skillfully guided with the trimmer across the whole length of the edge. If the quickly charred wick extended to far into the flame, too much heat was taken away and it burned with a deep red light. Its external edge would not be hot enough to consume the carbon particles and they would spread as sooty clouds in the igloo.

Whenever soapstone was available the lamp was invariably of this material. Soapstone was easily carved, free from flaws, usually, absorbed and retained heat, giving it up to melt the fat, to keep the oil fluid and to supply the wick. The reservoirs varied with partitions to control the flow of fat. The Eskimo lamp was always regarded as a fixture of the house, subject only to the removal of the family. There were, however, small lamps which were carried by travelers or hunters on trips. Extraordinarily long trips are reported to have been made to secure soapstone for the lamp. Dr. Boas records that Central Eskimos made journeys sometimes lasting several years in quest of soapstone, which was found in a few places, and rarely in pieces large enough for the manufacturing of pots and lamps. Today, in some remote areas, lamps are still used. In other

The oil Lamp (con'd)

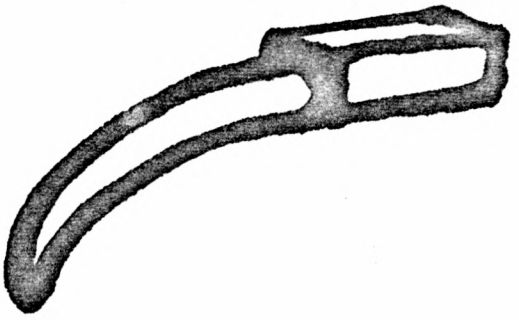
areas still slightly remote
metal has been shaped into
a crude replica and used.

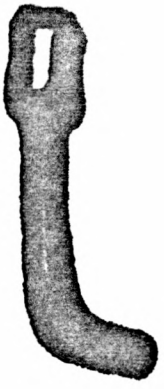


Types

Lamp trimmer

Some of these were made of slate. They had a four sided richly decorated handle and a round shaft with a point bent over on the end. The handle was ivory and had a point of iron. These trimmers varied, of course, in size and shape depending on personal preference and custom.





Blubber Dripper

This was conventionally of antler slightly curved with a concave edge cut into notches. Holes were cut in the ends for cords. The implement was hung horizontally by cords to the drying rack. Lamps of blubber on implement dripped onto the lamp.

Drying Rack (or net)

This rack points out another important feature of Eskimo domestic economy. Wood was scarce and a hoop of wood or bone was crossed by netting. The rack was supported from the ceiling or the side of the igloo. From it a pot was suspended over the oil lamp. Clothes were layed over the rack to dry.

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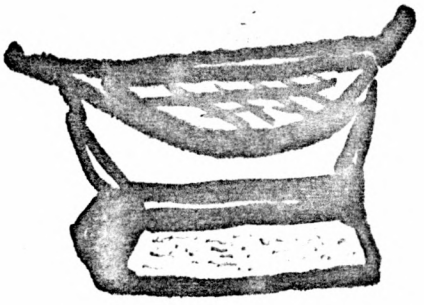


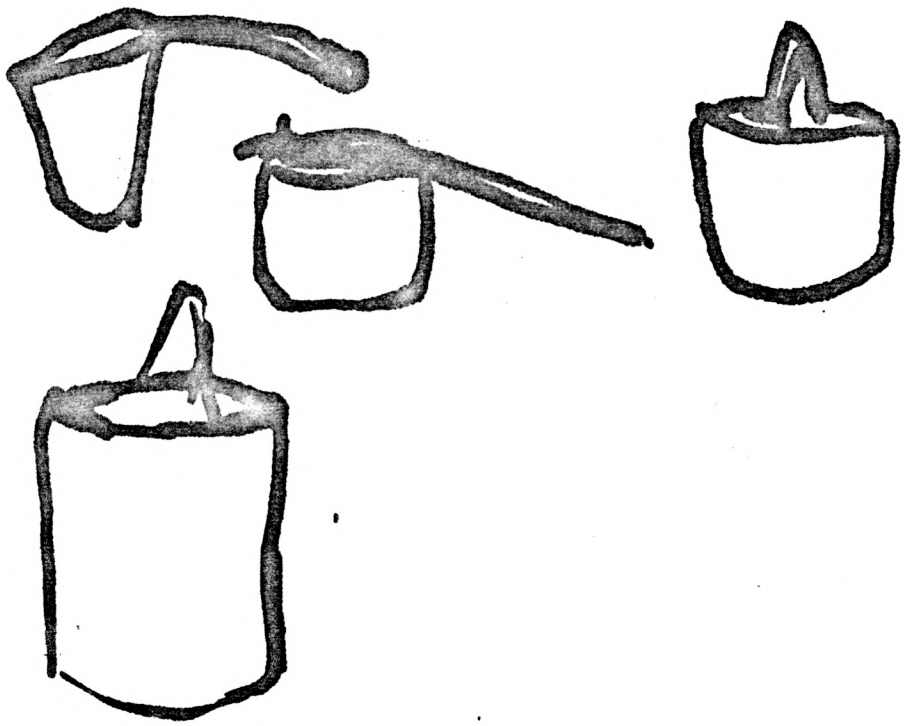
lamp

Stone Pot

The lamp and its accompanying pot usually agreed as to size. The rule being that the length of the pot should be equal to the length of the width edge. The Eastern arctic pots were of soapstone designed to hang or sit over the oil lamp. These heavy, awkward and fragile soapstone cooking pots were among the first traditional items to be displaced by European culture.

Water Pails

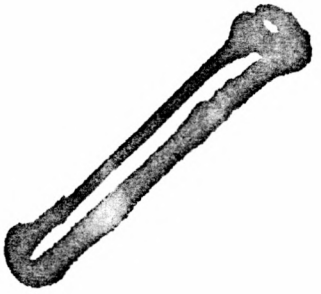
Made of sealskin, the pail had an oval bottom and vertical sides both made of two pieces. The upper rim was bent over and the edges sewn down on the outer side. A handle was split into two thongs at each end and these were sewn on to the rim about six or so inches apart.



Drinking Tubes

Drinking tubes were useful; especially in the spring when the lips were liable to crack because of the dry air.

Tubes were made of smooth bird bone or quill.



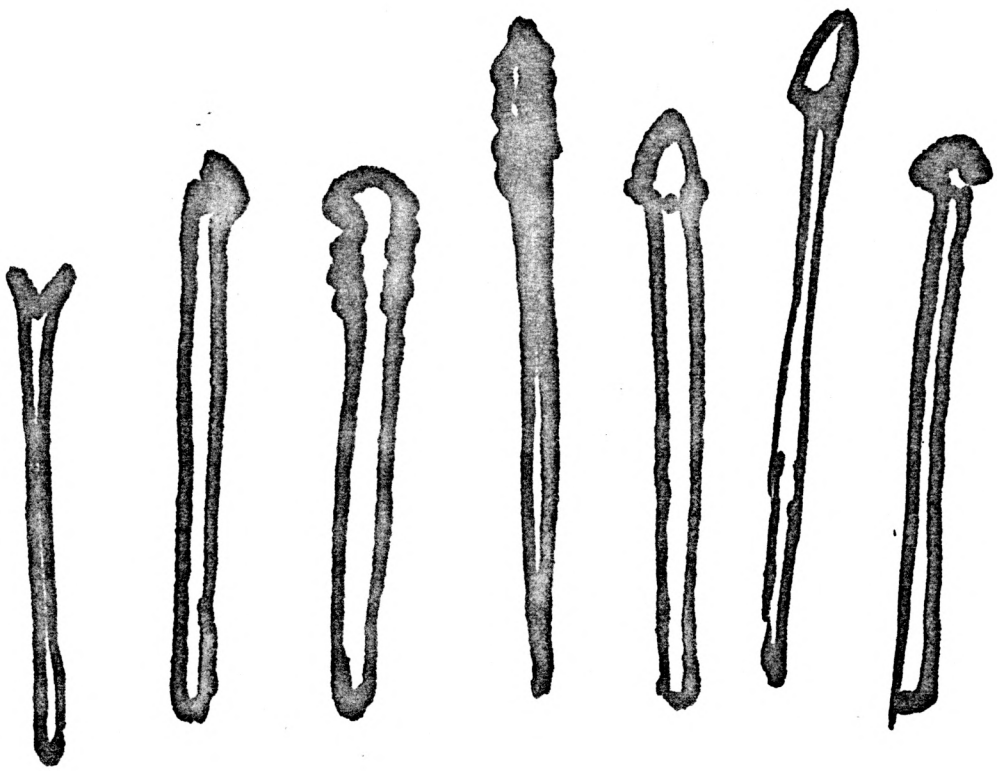
Blood Extractor

This was an instrument shaped like a shoe horn with four holes at the small end communicating with a trough that extended along the middle and got wider as it neared the broad part.

This was used to procure blood rated highly in the past by the people. It was inserted into the dead animal, the end with the holes of the trough in the wound. The mouth was placed at the other end and the blood drawn off.

Marrow Extractors

Marrow, regarded as a great delicacy in the arctic, was removed with a bone spatula. The bone instrument, often of a very simple form, tapered at the front and often with a carrying thong threaded through a hole at the end was used to dig the marrow free, as well as to act as a fork.

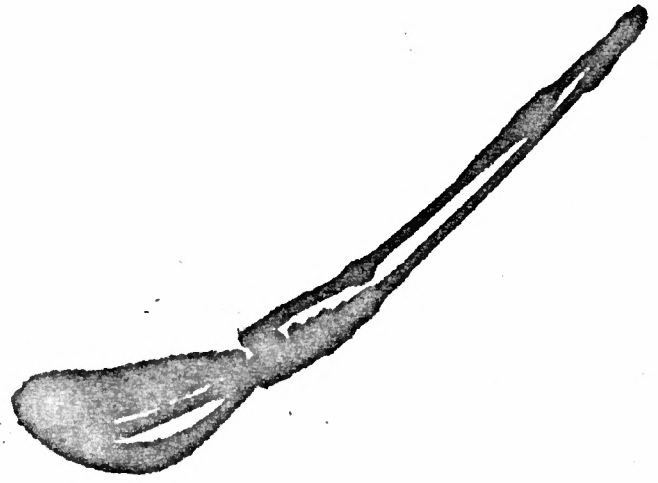


Meat Trays

The meat was often served up in wooden meat trays as common bowls. The most common form was oval. They had flat bottoms and vertical sides. Similar trays were used as blubber containers for unused pieces of the fat.

Dippers (soap ladles)

The soup was ladled out in large dippers of musk ox horn when it was available, or sealskin if a substitute was required. Similar ladles were used for water, oil and other liquids. For eating thick blood soup flat antler spoons were used.



HUNTING GEAR

The Bow

The most common bow, and probably the simplest form, consisted of three main pieces of antler, with an overall measurement of approximately fifty-six inches. The central part about 18 inches is cut off straight and the two outside pieces of equal length are slanted, and from a slight inward curve terminate in a noticeable outward turn. Those outer pieces were joined to the central section by the ends being placed to butt against one another, and two additional pieces to each join, a short stout piece on the outside which was minutely notched to fit into similar indentations on the central piece to make the connection substantial, and a smoothly finished long thin strip on the inside. Those were firmly tied together with a serving of sinew around the lot (butted ends of the central and outer sections, the short length on the outside and the long strip on the inside). The short piece prevented the parts from breaking apart while the long thin strip on the inside gave power to the spring of the bow. The inside strip could, in a way, be likened to the springs of a car, and by the same method the spring of the bow could be increased or decreased as desired. At each end of the bow is a knob of bone, or sometimes of wood covered with skin, with a deep notch for affixing the bowstring. The bowstring was made from five or six strands of sinew, twisted together. When stringing his weapon, the hunter sat on the ground and pushed the middle of the bow toward him. There were numerous types of bows manufactured by the Eskimos, but all were constructed on the same principle with whatever sort of material procurable in each particular region. However, the foregoing description will convey some idea in regard to the ingenuity employed.

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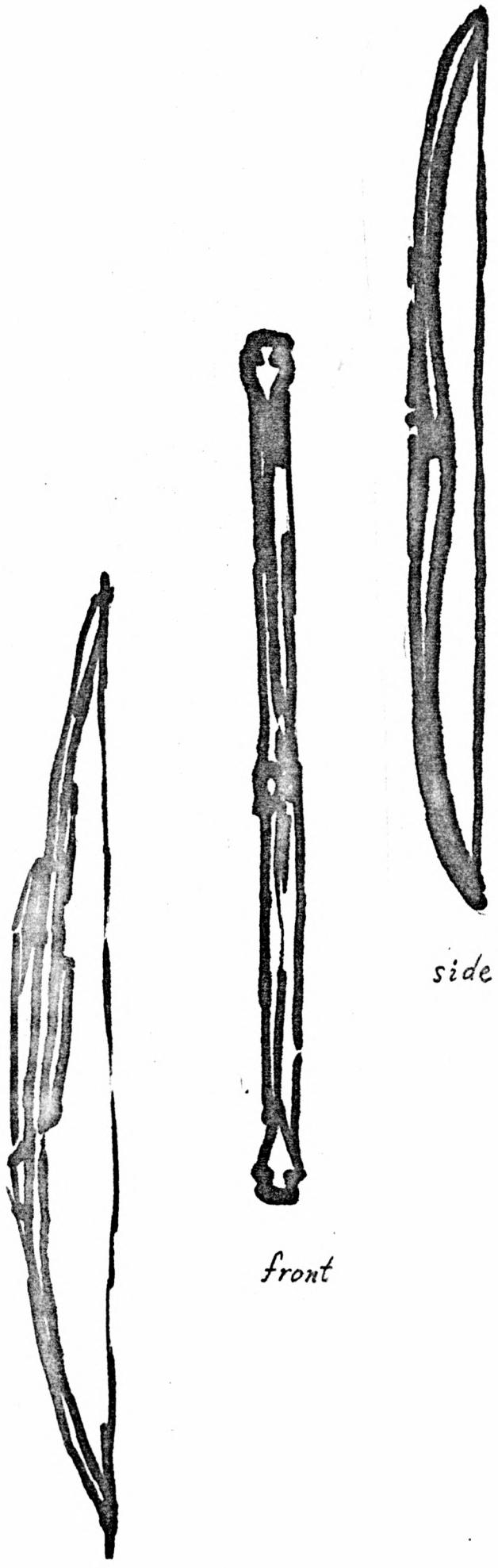
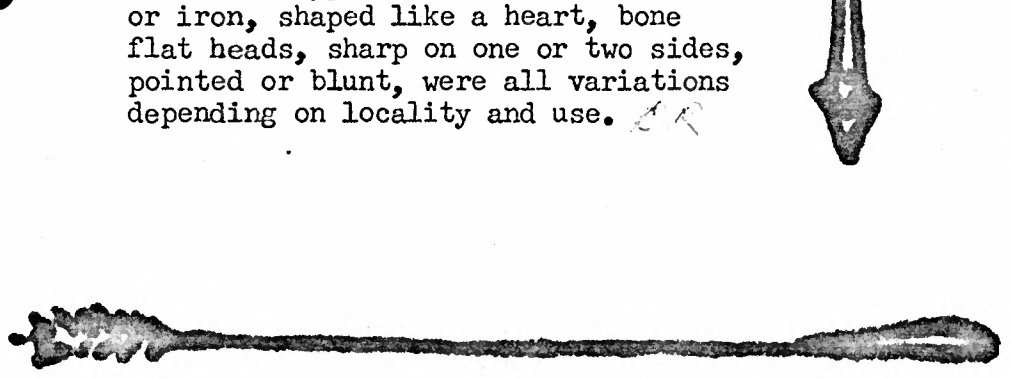


The Arrows

The arrows were made of round pieces of light and tough wood generally tapering a little towards the lower end, to which two feathers were attached. The bone heads of these arrows were inserted in the end of the shaft and lashed while the metal heads were riveted after being fixed in the wood. Formerly slate heads were in general use; now the heads are almost everywhere made of metal. In some regions, the head was attached to a foreshaft of antler which was in turn lashed to the main shank of the arrow. And again, often the arrow head was inserted with little or no lashing but was left to come loose from the shaft after penetration. When those were used, the hunter always carried a number of spare heads already prepared to be quickly fitted into the shaft. Arrow heads were shaped and sharpened by rubbing on abrasive stones specially selected for that purpose. There were many types of arrow heads. Stone or iron, shaped like a heart, bone flat heads, sharp on one or two sides, pointed or blunt, were all variations depending on locality and use.



sheaths

Caribou spear

This spear was used to hunt caribou from a kayak usually inland. An iron blade spear head was inserted into a foreshaft of antler lashed with sinew to a wooden shaft.

Knife for pressing out water

The caribou skins obtained from the caribou hunt with the kayak were wrung of water by using this antler one loowed edge knife.

Feather Letter

The tool for attaching the feathers to the end of the arrow shaft was generally the hollow wing bone of a large bird bevelled off at one end like a chisel, and tapered and rounded at the point. Its sole use, apparently was to flatten out the split base of the feathers. This was done by spreading out the slit and applying rubbing pressure.

Cutting Board for Feathers

Any flat piece of wood served for trimming the feathers. The board was usually from 4 inches to 5 inches long and from 1 inch to 2 inches wide. It was included with other bow and arrow hunting equipment carried by the hunter.

Arrow Straightener

Invariably made from bone or antler, and the hole through which the arrow passed was bevelled at front and back. There was considerable variation in the shape of the hole; in some specimens it was almost circular, in others triangular - square or oblong. Very rarely was the hole oval shaped. The arrow was put through the hole and pressure applied at the right spot along the shaft to force it back in alignment.

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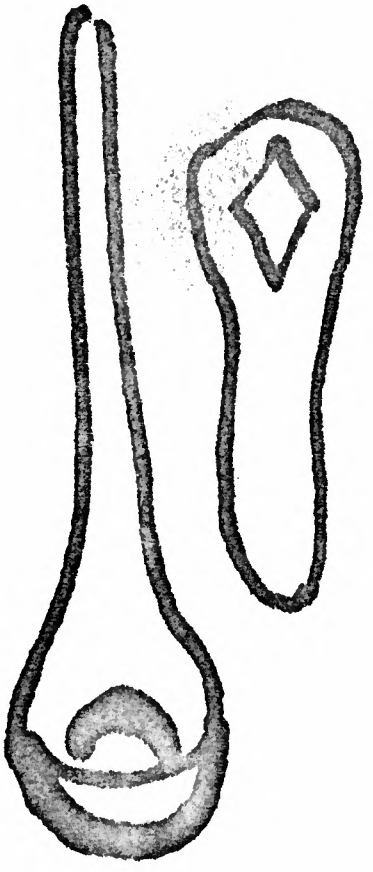
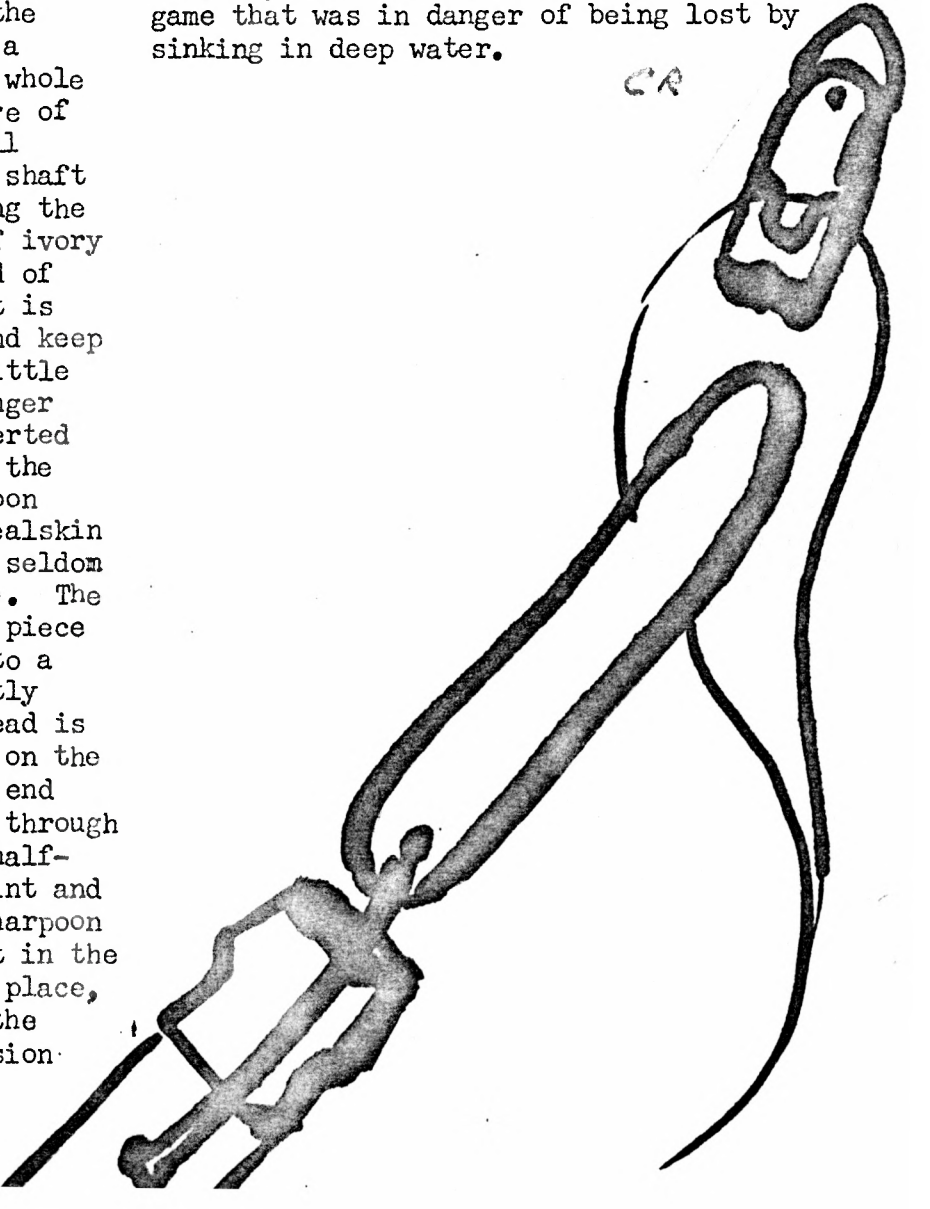
Approximate dimensions:

12" in length
2½" at base, tapering to 1¼" at handle.



Harpoon (Throwing)

This weapon was, and still is, probably the most essential item used by the Eskimo hunter. It is ingeniously designed and skillfully constructed. Originally there were several types, specifically fashioned for the different animals hunted. Eventually, over the years, one model has evolved which has been adapted for general use. The shaft consists of a stout pole oval in section from four and a half to five feet in length to which an ivory head is fitted on one end. The ivory head is morticed to fit so closely that neither rivets nor lashings are required. A cavity at the top of the ivory head is shaped into which a walrus tusk is fitted to form a ball and socket joint. The tusk and the head are fastened in a most unique manner by a series of holes in the tusk, and shaft, so placed that a thong of sealskin will keep the whole steady and secure. At the centre of gravity (balancing point) a small piece of ivory is lashed to the shaft to support the hand when throwing the weapon. Sometimes this piece of ivory is shaped to easily fit the hand of the hunter, but most commonly it is simply a stop to aid the grip and keep the fingers from slipping. A little forward of the hand grip, or finger stop, a small ivory knob is inserted in the shaft and serves to hold the harpoon line taut from the harpoon head. The harpoon line is of sealskin and cut to variable lengths but seldom less than five fathoms (30 feet). The harpoon head is a spear pointed piece of metal slotted and riveted into a head of ivory shaped with slightly flaring tail fins. The spear head is morticed at the tail end to fit on the point of the walrus tusk at the end from that on the shaft. A hole through the width of the head is bored halfway up its length (including point and head), to which the end of the harpoon line is neatly attached. A slit in the harpoon line at the appropriate place, slipped over the ivory knob on the shaft will cause sufficient tension when the head is fitted on the point of the tusk to keep the whole firm and solid. The razor sharp point is always protected when not in use by a sealskin sheath to fit over the whole head. The weight of the weapon together with the force thrown will cause the head to penetrate quite deeply. On the movement (struggle) of the animal the harpoon head will disengage by the ball and socket joint between the shaft and tusk breaking apart. A steady pull on the line will set the harpoon head firmly in the flesh in a crosswise position. The shaft is retrieved by a loop of sealskin made fast to the forward part of the shaft through which the harpoon line is passed. More in order to give the weapon a better appearance a cap of ivory is affixed to the dead end of the shaft. The combination of harpoon, line and float was used to secure game that was in danger of being lost by sinking in deep water.



Harpoon Bladder or Float

The sealskin float that is part of the harpoon combination of harpoon, line and float, is made by skinning a seal in a way to keep the skin intact. That is without slitting it up the belly as is usually done in the skinning process. A medium size adult ringed seal is selected and skinned by literally pulling the carcass through the mouth. Sometimes the opening is enlarged by means of a cut along the throat. The nails of the flippers are frequently extracted and the flipper tips tightly sewn up. The hind flippers and tail are cut off after skinning out as much as possible to provide enough skin to tie up into a neck. At the end of the neck a toggle of wood is folded into the skin and the whole firmly lashed together to which the harpoon line is easily attached. All lashings are done with narrow gauge line specially cut for the purpose. Seals selected for making floats invariably provide best quality skins free of holes or damage. Those seals are always killed by shooting through the head. After the carcass has been removed the skin is carefully scraped free of hair and grease. Then at the mouth end of the float while inside out the loose skin is neatly gathered around a deeply grooved ivory or wooden disc about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide and bound firmly by lashing. When the float finally resumes its natural shape the skin around the disc will be in the inverted position and trimly finished in appearance. A hole about 3/8 inch in diameter is bored in the disc by which the float is inflated and deflated (by mouth). A tightly fitting wooden plug will do for a stopper. The hind end is then temporarily tied over and the float inflated and allowed to dry. The drying process is a rather tedious affair as the float must be turned "inside and out" alternately in the right proportion of exposure to air and sun, to get a properly cured effect. Finally, with the float turned right side out, the hind end is tied off as described above. Most often the skin will have to be moistened to make a watertight job. The float is used chiefly to save game from being lost by sinking in deep water.

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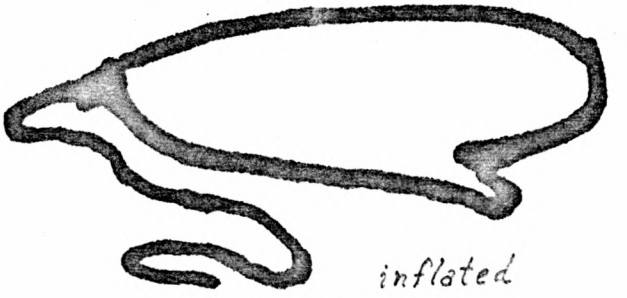

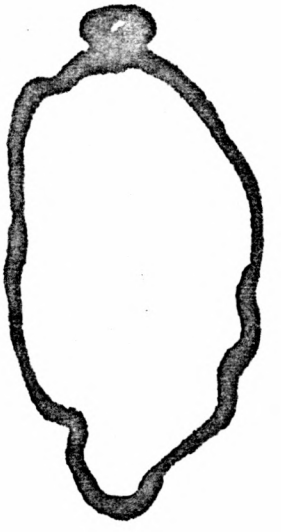

Harpoon Flat Drag Anchor

This device was used when hunting the larger type of game such as the walrus and whale. It was meant to slow-up the animal after it was harpooned and tagged with the float. The float and drag were used together at the same time. It consisted of a hoop about 18 inches in diameter, over which was stretched a piece of scraped sealskin and allowed to dry. The hoop was originally of willow, whale bone or antler. Wood was used in preference when procurable because of its being more pliable and easily made up into one piece. The skin was lashed to the frame through a series of holes along the edge. The ends of the hoop were morticed and also lashed together. By means of four lines running from the frame it was fastened to the harpoon line. A hole about two inches in diameter through the center controlled pressure on the skin and held it to a direct course while being towed. This gadget was restricted, more or less, to the sole use of primitive weapons when hunting. It was discarded on the introduction of the rifle by which game was immediately dispatched.

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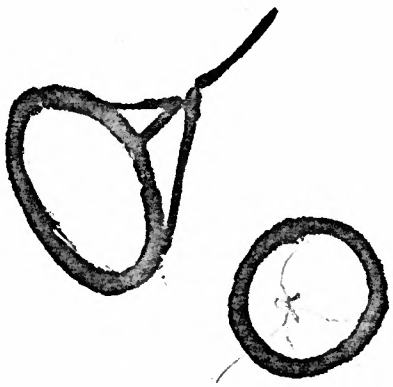
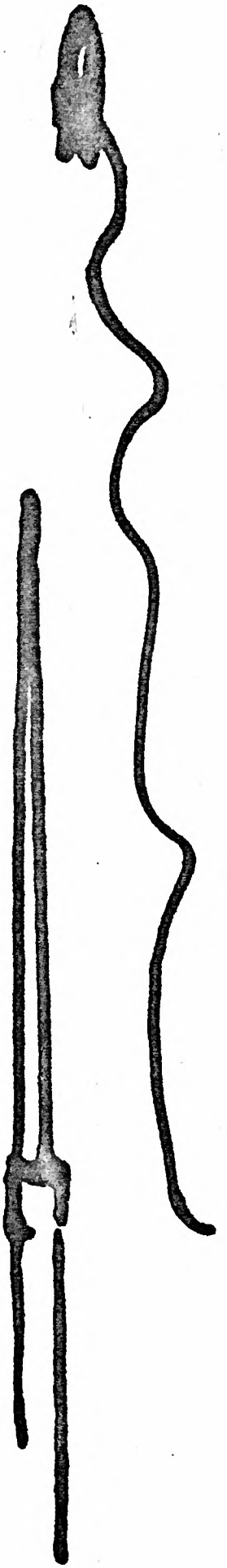


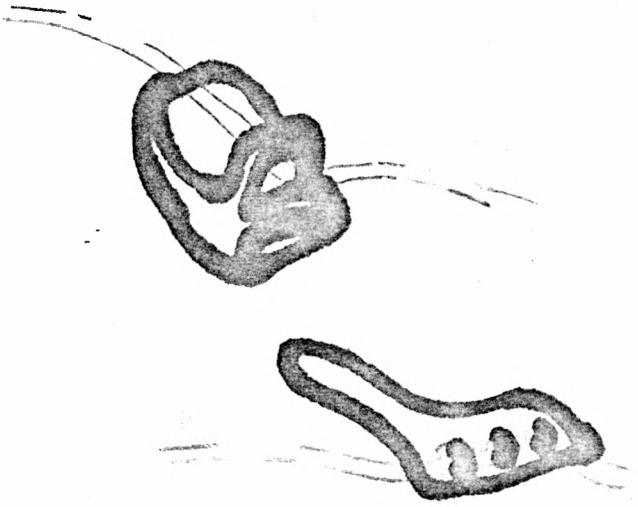
Harpoon (Spearing)

This type was used for seals at their breathing holes. It consisted of a wooden shaft slenderer than the throwing harpoon, fitted with a point of rod iron measuring about three feet in length by 3/8 inch in diameter. The point was inserted quite deeply into the shaft and lashed to keep the end from splitting. An ice spear usually served for this purpose as the shaft and pint were of identical construction. The harpoon head was similar to the throwing model except that it was slenderer and longer. Metal harpoon heads in one piece were preferred. The line of sealskin was the same length and thickness. The same idea of tension was to keep the head and line in place for operation was also the same as with the throwing harpoon. Although it was generally used for actually procuring live seals at their breathing holes by direct thrust it could be used in emergency, with the float, for retrieving purposes. This was probably the most variably constructed weapon amongst the Eskimos. However, the main idea was the same namely; shaft and iron point fixed in one piece. In certain places the shaft was shorter or longer and vice versa in regard to the point. Antler and whale bone spliced together as a substitute for wood was often the case. Sometimes to make it more practical an ice chisel hook or small scoop was attached to the tail end.



Harpoon line stoppers

Often made of ivory, these stoppers were often fixed to the ice hunting harpoon line in order to hold the shaft to it when the seal was harpooned and the line ran out. The stopper was then caught by the loop of the shaft.



Harpoon rest

While the hunter waited by the seals' breathing hole, he rested his harpoon in reach parallel to the ice on two harpoon rests which were spaced apart standing upright in the snow. This insured the hunter that the seal would not hear his movements when he reached for his harpoon to dispatch it. Any slight movement of the hunter's feet would frighten the seal away.

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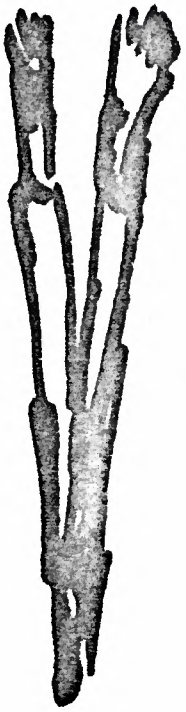
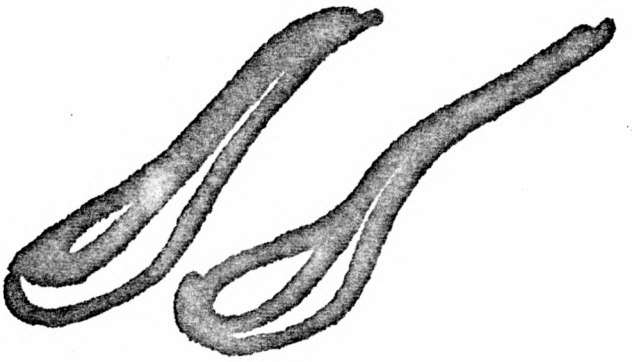


Seal Indicators

The hunter would stand very still, not moving a muscle, over the breathing hole waiting for the seal to come up for air. Over the years the Inuit have devised many items of equipment. Two methods to detect the seal's intention to emerge at the breathing hole involved the use of a ball of light material attached to a string the hunter was holding as it floated in the water. The seal snorting and blowing air would cause the ball of fluff to bob up. Another means of detection used a long thin rod of antler approximately twice the length of a knitting needle with a small disc of horn or antler placed at one end. At the other end was an eye with a sinew cord which connected the rod with a thicker and shorter rod of bone. The seal announces his intention while under water hidden to emerge by pushing up the detector rod hanging in the water point down. When the hunter sees his detector disturbed, he drives his seal harpoon down hard into the seals head which often was still not visible. Often today hunters who don't use such detectors will not hunt seal on very windy days since they say they can't hear the seal announce his intention to emerge, nor can they see subtle disturbances on the water in the hole.

Scoop

A scoop of bone, antler, wood or a combination of materials was formed to scoop loose ice from breathing holes before the hunter settled down to wait for the seal.



Throat and Wound Plugs

After the carcass of the animal was drawn out of the water the wounds were closed with ivory or wooden plugs - either triangular or square in section. The plug is pushed under the skin, which is closely tied to its head. The head being wider than the shaft of the plug. Another form of plug which, however, was rarely used had a screw thread cut around it. The skin was drawn over the plug and lashed into one of the threads. Another type that was fairly popular was a thick button disc that had a deep groove notched all around. Large wound openings such as a shattered head was just drawn together and tied with a piece of string. The purpose of the plugs was to save the blood and also to prevent dripping when it was necessary to carry game inside the kayak. Nowadays plugs are never seen.

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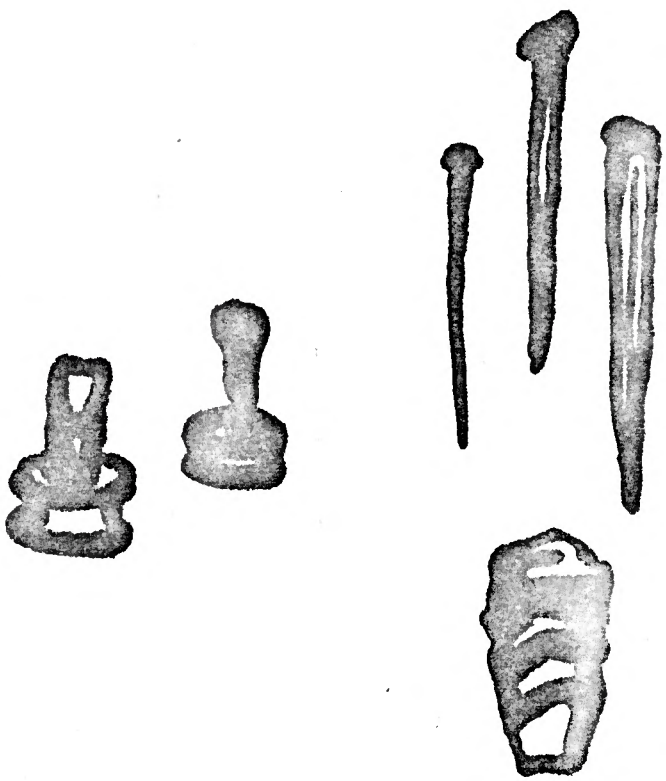

Wound needles

Often these bone skewers were used for closing the cut in the seals belly.

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Seal drags and bag handles

Both the seal drags and bag handles were constructed along the same lines. The latters purpose need not be explained. The carrying devises were usually made of looped, square flipper thong with a wood, bone or ivory handle. The looped thong extended from the short tubular handle onto which the item to be lifted, dragged or carried was attached.

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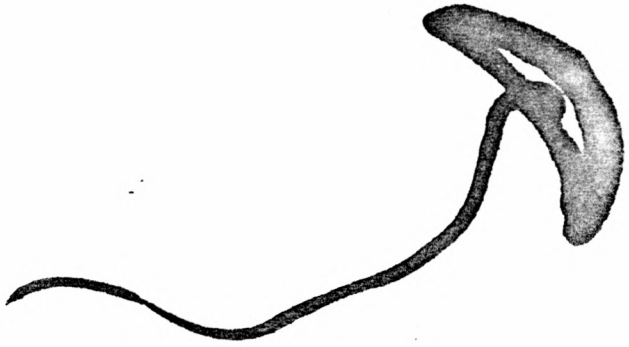


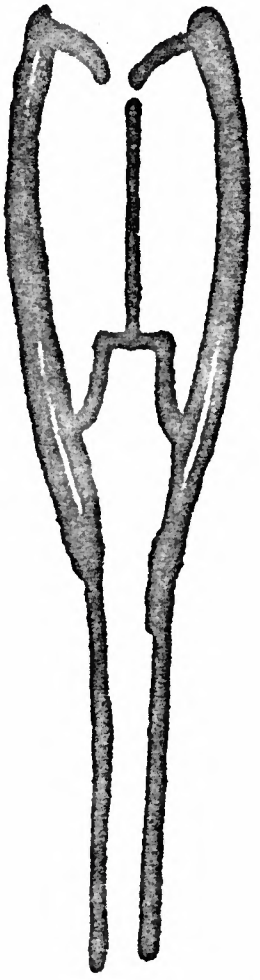
Fish Spear (leister)

Two varieties of fish spear were employed, the trident and the leister. The leister type being probably the most generally used. The leister was preferred for spearing fish in lakes when they came to nibble at the lure. It was used to best advantage through holes in the ice. The trident for the migrating char that entered the weirs on the inward run upstream to the lakes. The handle of the leister was simply a long pole with a spike like point about 4 - 5 inches long securely inserted in the end. On the outside of the poles are lashed two strips of stiffly flexible antler which are placed on opposite sides in a manner that they flare out slightly from one another at the ends. Through the end of each strip was driven a prong of metal slanting upward to meet just below the point embedded in the end of the handle. In the process of spearing a fish as the prongs were jabbed down on the back of a fish they opened and allowed the spear to slide down on each side, at the same time the centre spikelike point was forced down through the back of the fish. The stiff antler strips exert a continuous inward pressure on the prongs which held the fish securely at the sides while, at the same time it was transfixed by the centre point from the top. Once the spear had been set into any object it was impossible for it to escape. The trident type spear was not quite so elaborate. Instead of prongs, barbs were notched on the sides of the centre point and the antler strip extensions. With a very active game fish there was more likelihood of it wiggling free than it would from the leister model.

Approximate dimensions:

A good stout pole about 1½ - 2" in diameter. Length as required in proportion to depth of water. Minimum length about 7'. Antler extension 10 - 12". Width flaring at prong ends about 6".

CR



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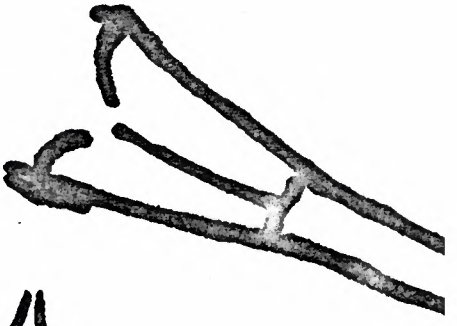
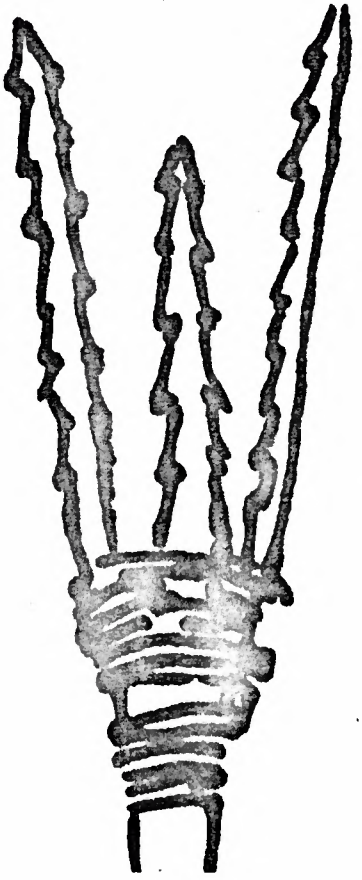
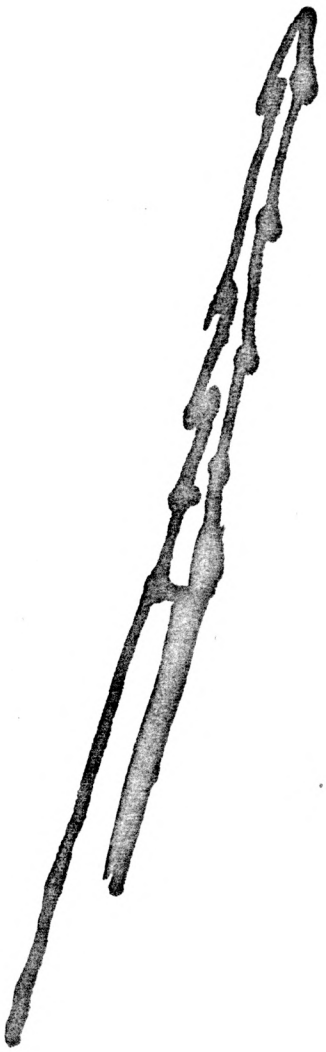




Fish harpoon

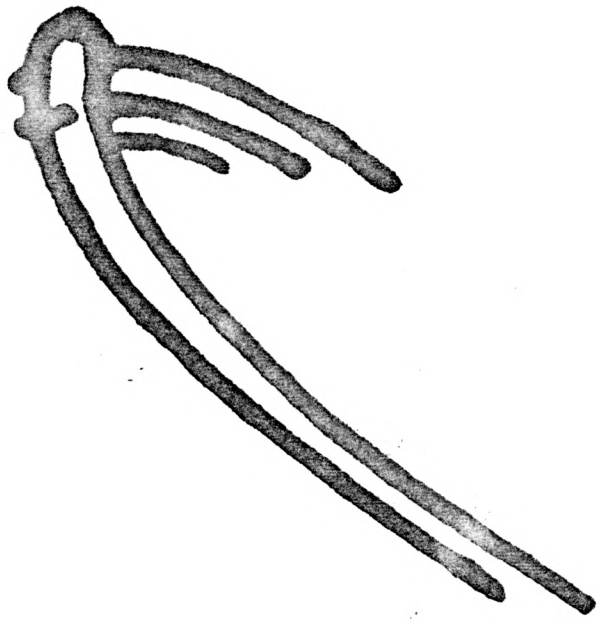
The fish harpoon, not known by the Baffin or Quebec Inuit was used in the Keewatin. It had a long head of antler with a larger or smaller number of barbs and a socket in the butt. A typical specimen had a head with three barbs on one side, four on the other. The head was made fast to the shaft with a short line of sinew. At the middle of the shaft was tied a seal thong with a loop at the loose end.. This weapon was used as a spear driven downward into the fish with the barbs holding fast.

E.C.



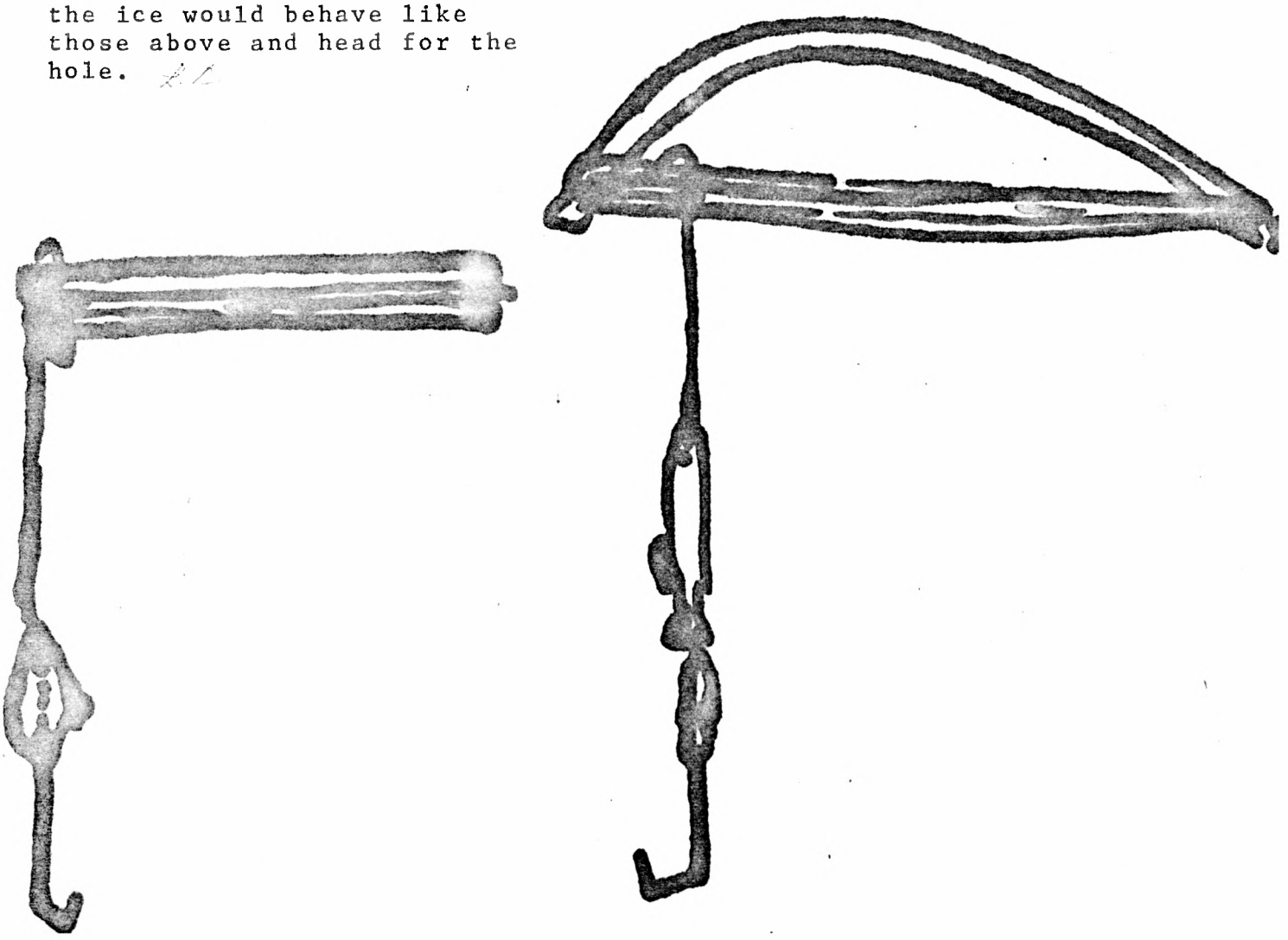
Fish rake

This tool was made up of a shaft with three claws in a column. It was used to gaff fish.



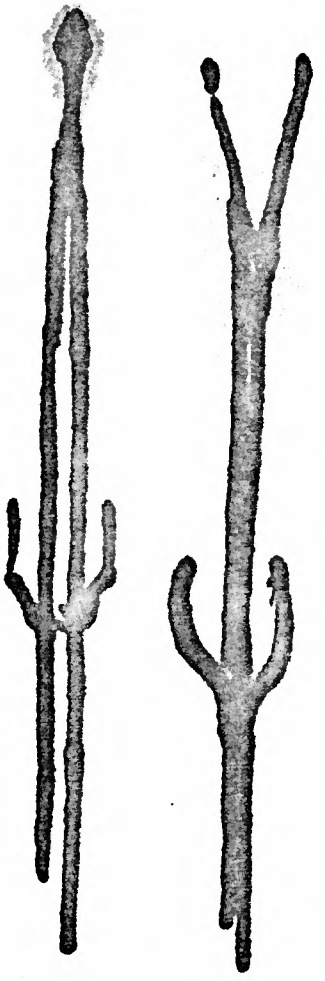
Fish jigger and lure

This was a barbless hook attached to a plaited sinew cord wound up on a sharply bent fishing rod approximately one foot long. A flashing white lure of ivory or bone was used instead of bait. The lure was jigged up and down to attract the fish which often were successfully snagged on the hook and then pulled up rapidly. A variation to this approach was to use the rod with a barbless hook lacking. In this case a fish spear was driven down into the fish when it was sited close to the lure. In winter, its been said, the caught fish were often arranged in a circle on the ice, around the hole, with their heads toward the hole from where they were taken possibly in the hope that the fish below the ice would behave like those above and head for the hole.



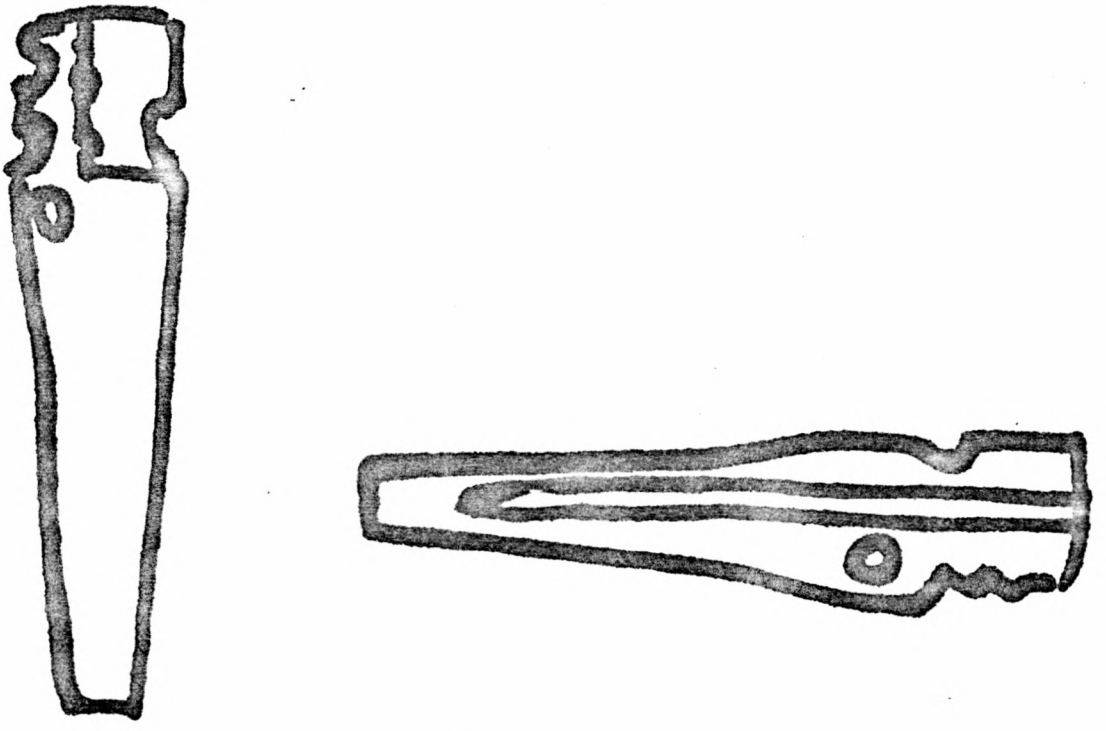
Bird Dart (spear)

This spear used for birds, young animals and sometimes fish had two forms. The one had two prongs like a fork at the extremety and three other barbed ones in the middle diverging in different directions so that if the end pairs should miss some of the centre ones would strike. The second form had no diverging ones in the centre but three instead of two at the extremety. These spears were often thrown with a throwing stick.



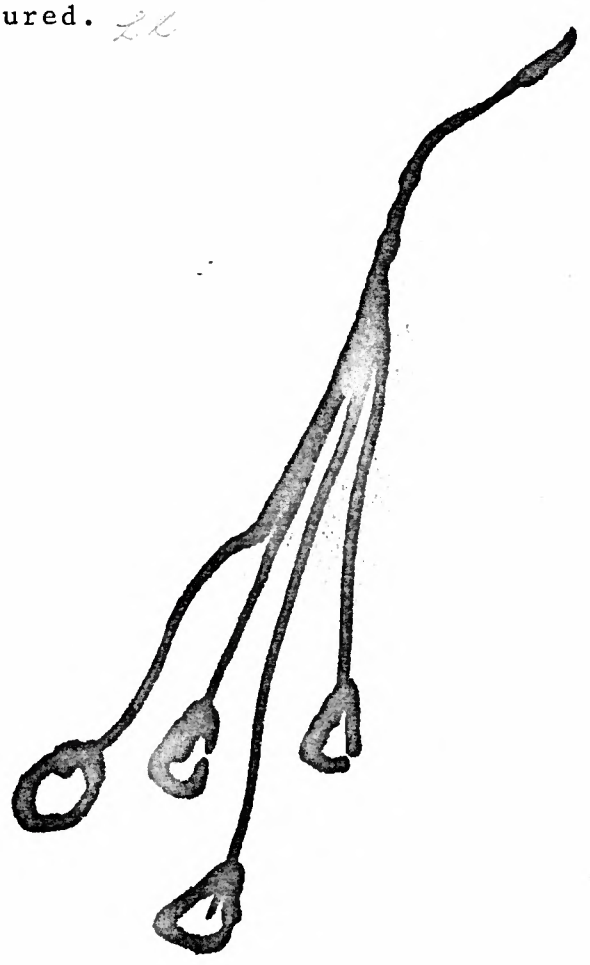
Throwing stick

The throwing stick was used to give additional velocity to the spear. It was constructed of a flat board approximately eighteen inches long having a groove to receive the shaft and a hole for the finger and thumb, and a small spike filled for a hole in the end of the spear. The bird dart and sometimes the caribou lance received extra momentum from the throwing stick.



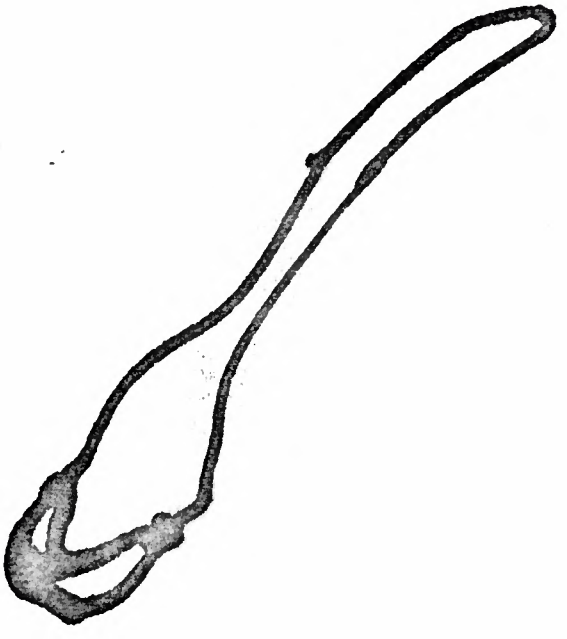
Bola

A weapon made of a half a dozen stones or bone weights tied to a thong was used for hunting ducks and other birds. It was very effective and simply made. The bola whirled around above the head and then let fly towards the bird as it flew would on contact wrap itself around the bird, pinioning the preys wings back so that could only drop to the ground and be captured.



Sling

The sling was known to all Inuit groups but was unknown in the ancient culture in the form here. It consists of two long thongs attached to a pocket. A stone placed in the pocket of the sling twirled about above the shoulder becomes a projectile when released. This simple weapon used by youngsters today was, at one time an effective tool used by adults for killing small game.

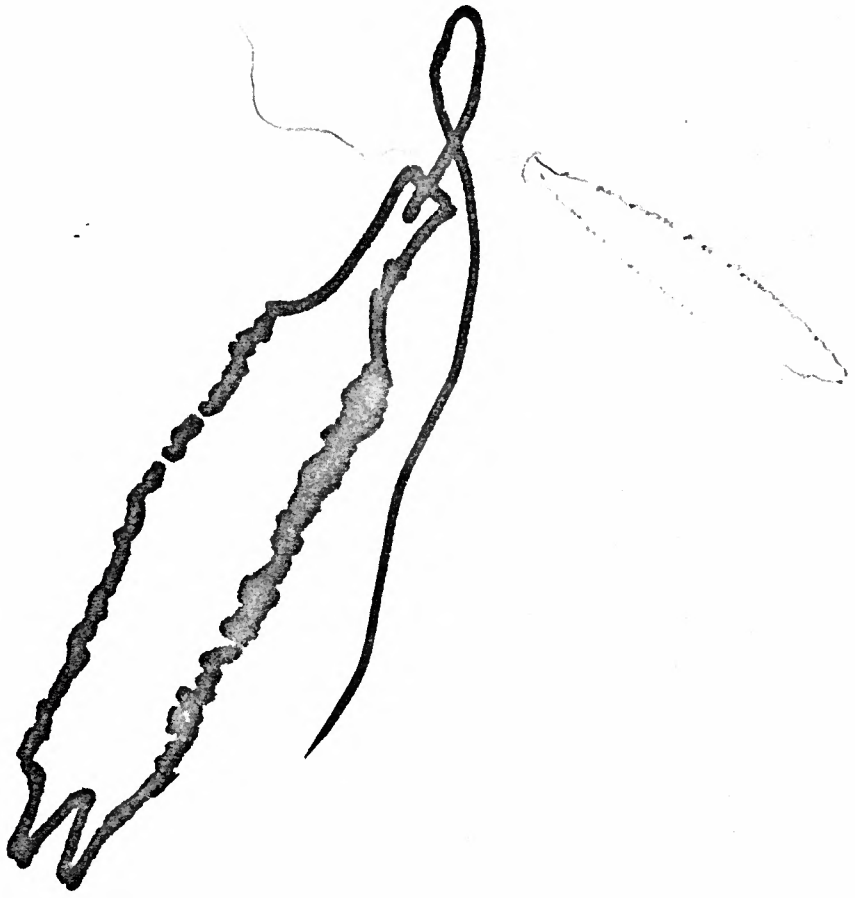


LEISURE

Bull Roarer

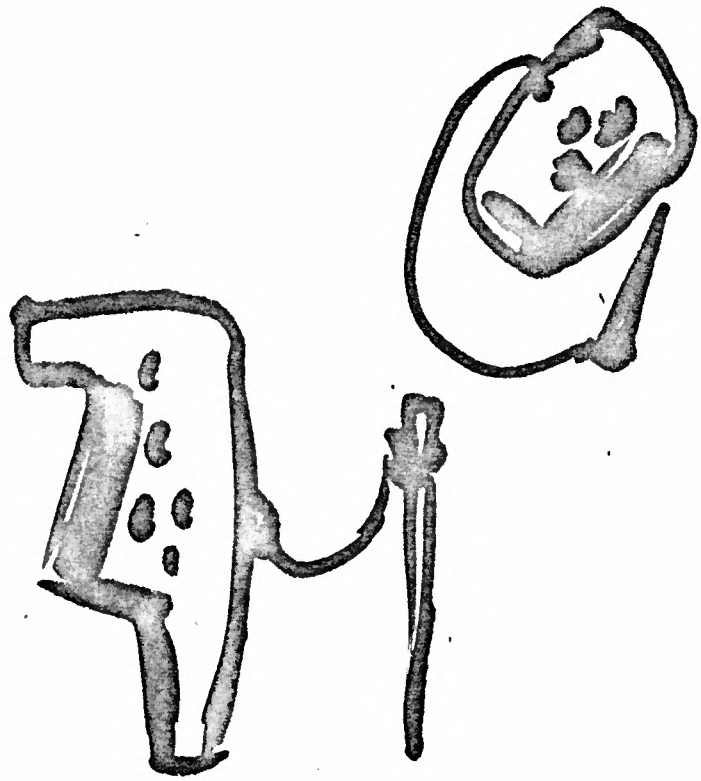
It consisted of an elliptical slab of wood with finely serrated edges. When tied to a cord of sinew thread and twirled rapidly above the head, a whistling sound was made.

This toy was, as is with many toys, popular both with the adults as well as the children.



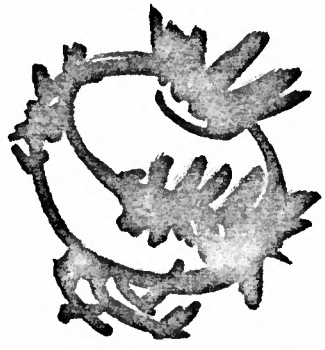
Cup and Ball Game

To play this game, attempts were made to toss a piece of perforated bone into the air and catch this by piercing one of the holes with a stick of bone, ivory or antler which was attached by thong to the perforated bone. The holes had different values and participants took turns to attempt for the highest score.



Ball games

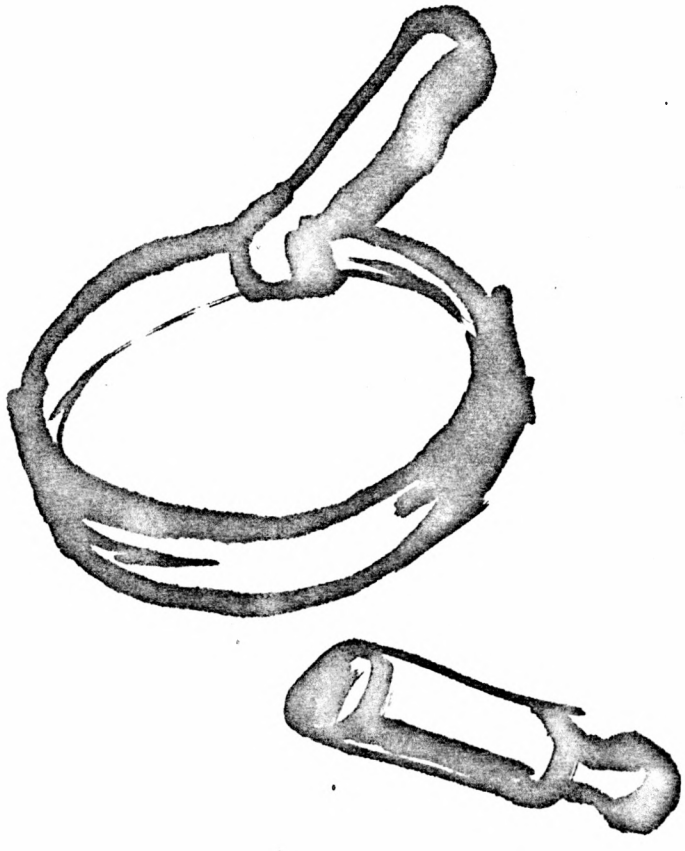
In the summer ball games were very popular among both children and adults. One game required always keeping the ball moving, but away from the opponents. The ball was often of seal skin filled with gravel.



Drum

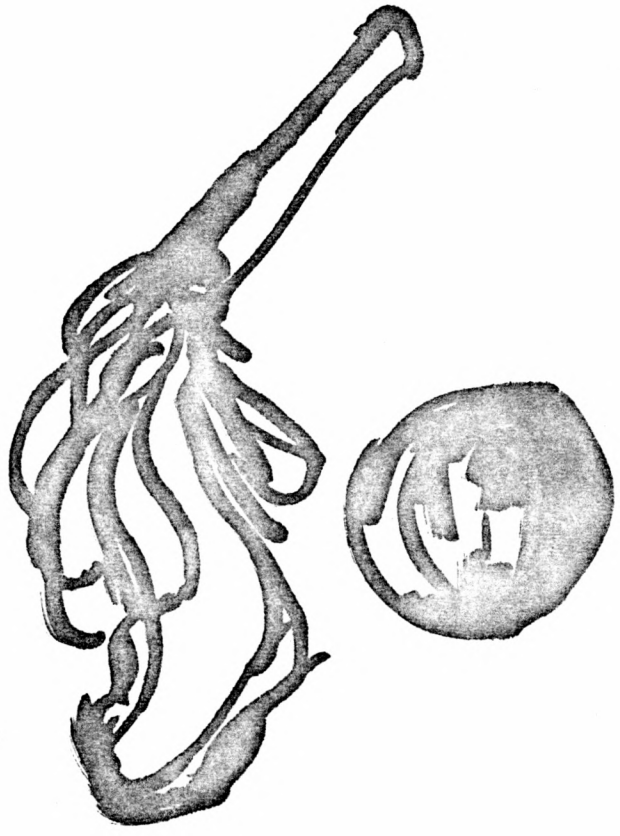
The drum was the sole musical instrument. The usual form was a ring of wood. The ring nested in a notch in the upper side of the handle which at the fore end was conical terminating in a knob while at the other end was rounded. The caribou skin was approximately eighty inches with a handle of twenty inches long. The drum stick, in the form of a club, was wrapped in thong at the head. It had a narrow handle which widened at the end.

The drum, used for dances, was held so that its handle is supported by the wrist. It is struck on both sides of the frame alternately. In some regions of the arctic the drum is still a very popular instrument.



Football and Driver

The driver or whip was possibly handled like a field hockey stick to drive the ball toward the opponents goal when it was not being kicked, thrown or carried in that direction.



Handles for trial of strength

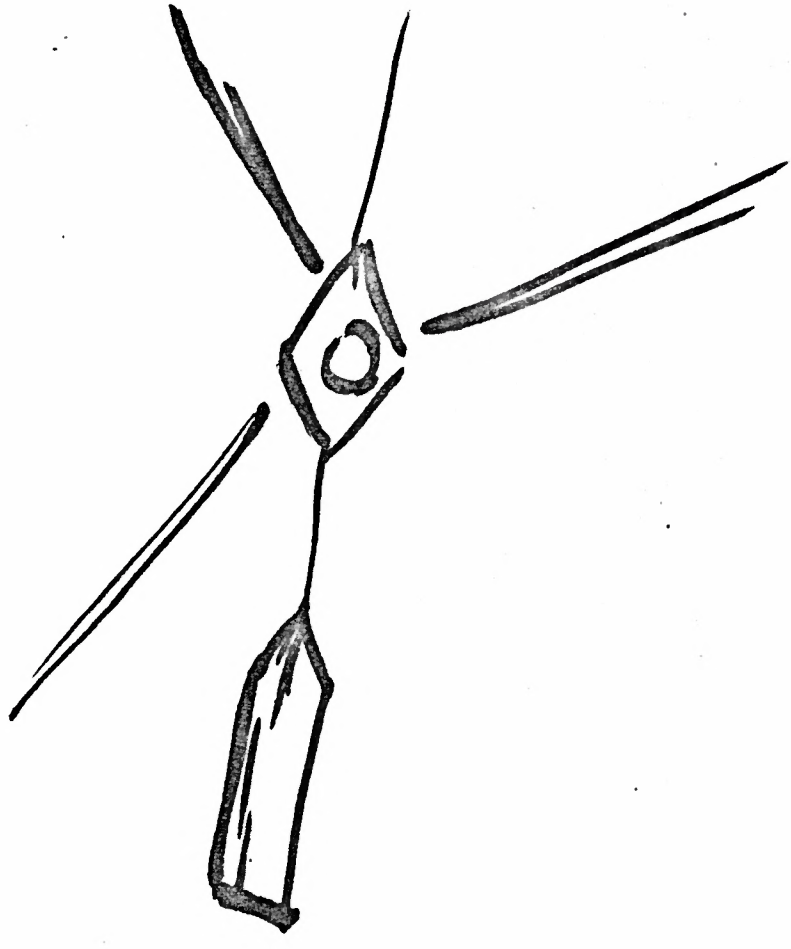
Two slightly tapered grips of wood were connected by a short thong. Two opponents would sit opposite and grip handles, pulling to draw the opponent off balance.

LL

Nuglutang game

The game called nuglutang was once very popular. A small flat disc or plate like form with a hole in the centre was hung from the roof of a snow house or tent and steadied like a plumb bob by a heavy stone or piece of bone, antler or ivory hanging from its lower end. The players stand around it. When the winner of the last game gives a signal every one tries to hit the hole with a stick. The one who succeeds has one.

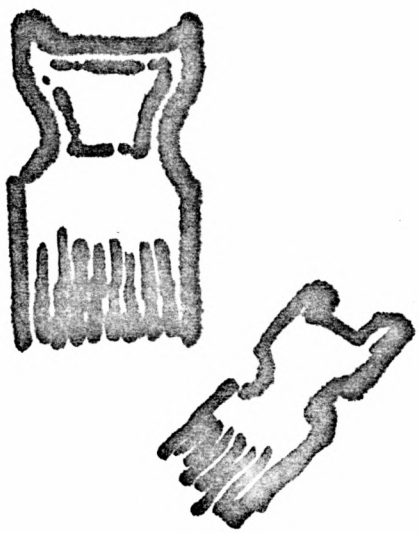
↑ corn?



Combs

Combs were commonly made of antler. As a rule they had a flat back. Some tapered off. The number of teeth varied from seven to fifteen but usually about ten.

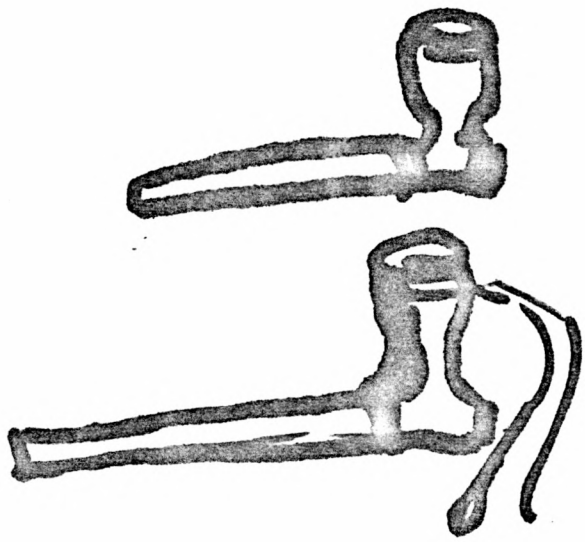
The handle was often decorated with incised lines.



Pipe

Parry, the explorer, reports that smoking was not known in his time. The bowl was cut from soapstone and the stem was made of two longnitudinal wooden pieces bound together with sinew thread. The head often had three brass mountings.

no sequitur!

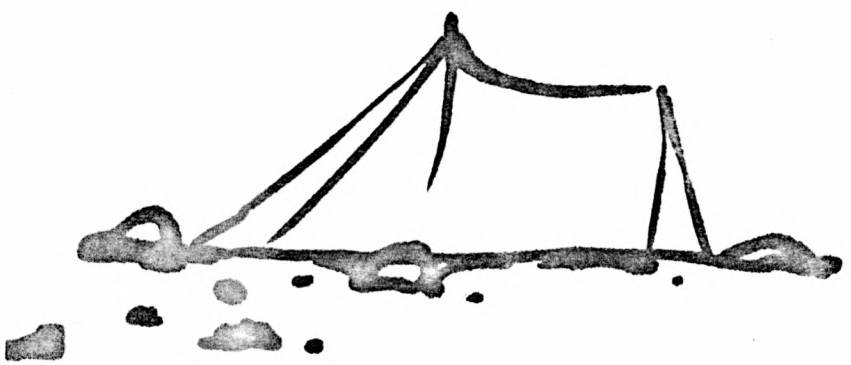


SHELTER

Tent

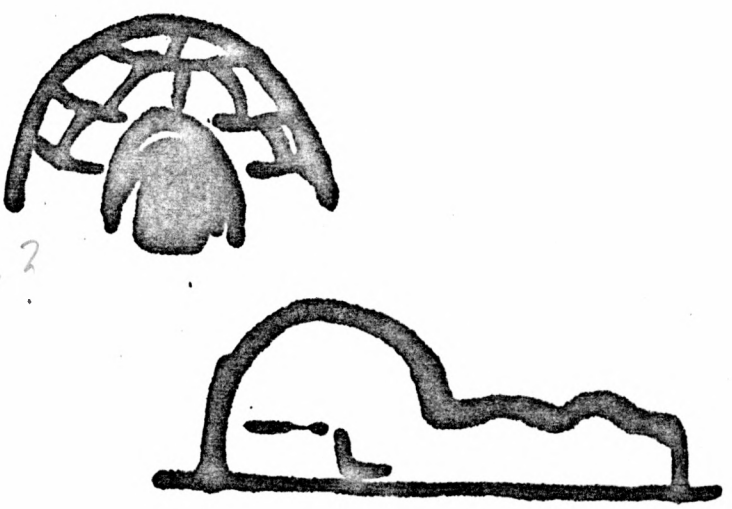
This temporary summer dwelling was generally made of the skin of a walrus cut dollar bill thin and made extremely transparent. It was very oily and often supported by a centre pole of bone or broken spears. The entrance faced the south. Sealskins were placed as protection to its back or northern point. Several caribou skins were placed in the back to make a sleeping area on the bare rock. The seams of the covering was sewed together making it waterproof. Additional skins were hung over the doorway. Large stones instead of pegs gave size and shape to this tent. For security and steadiness the top of the pole support had one or two skin lines but in Quebec where trees were available a tripod of four poles supported the tent. One side of the floor area was reserved for the larder of accumulated flesh, blubber, bones, birds and eggs. The tent was pitched at will, wherever the game was plentiful.

cut



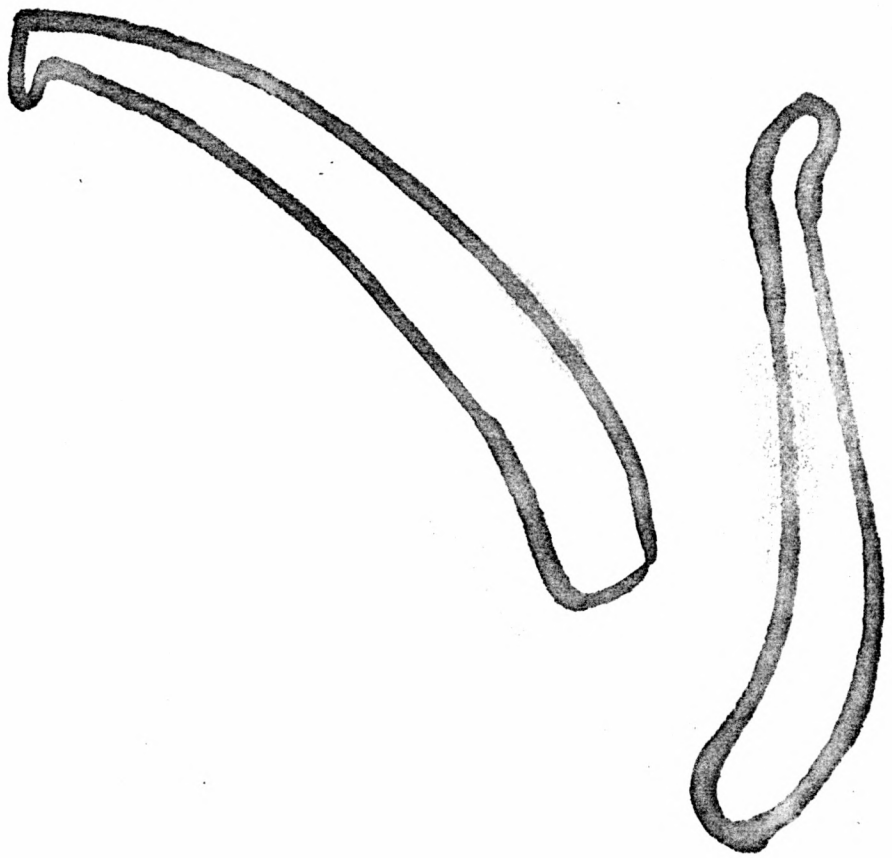
Igloo (snow house)

The snow house was not common to all regions of the arctic. Igloos, which mean merely houses, were made of stone, driftwood, whale bone, skin or anything else that was available. The igloo, as has been thought by many, is not warm and cosy, nor safe and sound. Igloos could collapse, be swept away on an ice flow, or ice up and have to be re-built. The advantage was it may have been the only shelter available. It could be left behind without much loss. However it could not (talking now about the snow house) be built without the correct snow. It also required a great deal of skill and experience to construct an effective shelter. The first need is a bank of snow, hard packed by the wind and laid down in a single storm. A snowbank of uneven hardness or one made of the snow of several storms produced poor snow blocks. The suitable snow surface is marked in a circle. The first blocks, standing on their edges, are arranged in a low circular wall following the line marked. A large knotch is cut in a block in this row and the second row, and the consecutive ones then spiral up, each row knotched when completed. The blocks were cut to slope inward to make the wall slant. The edges of the last (key stone) are beveled to fit completing the dome. The builder as he went, working from the inside would cut blocks from one half of the floor area forming a sleeping platform near the roof where the heat rises. Its said that a travel igloo takes only about an hour to erect when put together by an experienced Inuit.



Snow Beater

The snow beater was an indispensible household utensil. The outdoor clothing had to be rid of snow before the wearer could enter the house. Otherwise the snow would soon melt and the wet clothing could no longer be worn out until dry. The typical snow beater was of wood with well rounded edges and a shaped handle with a knob at the end.



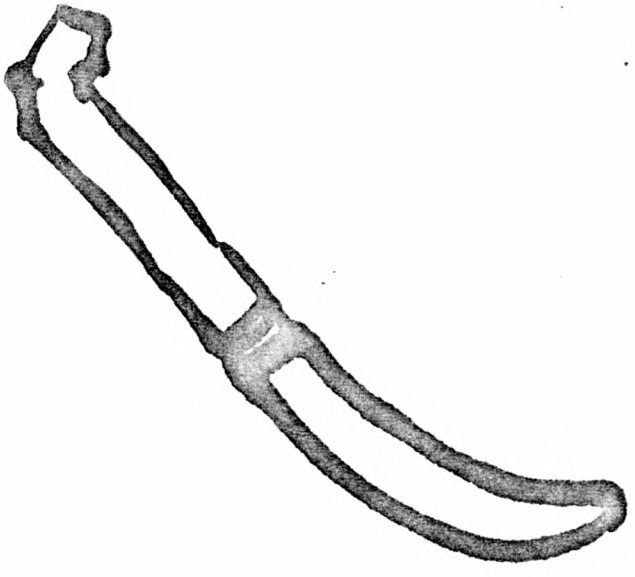
Snow probe

A long shaft, usually of antler having a knob for a handle, and a tip of ivory or antler was used to search out hidden seal breathing holes. It was also often used for testing the safety of ice trails and for testing the consistancy and quality of the snow for igloo making.

Snow knife

This was every hunter's close companion. The early ones, made of bone, ivory and antler came in varied styles and sizes depending on locality. Steel blades, sold by the HBC with manufactured uniformity were used with handmade handles.

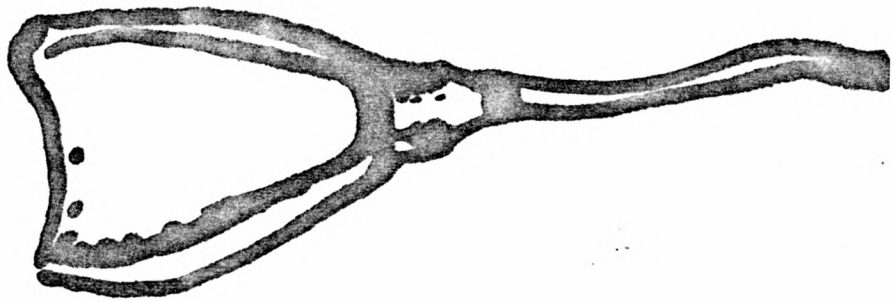
will your reader know what this is?

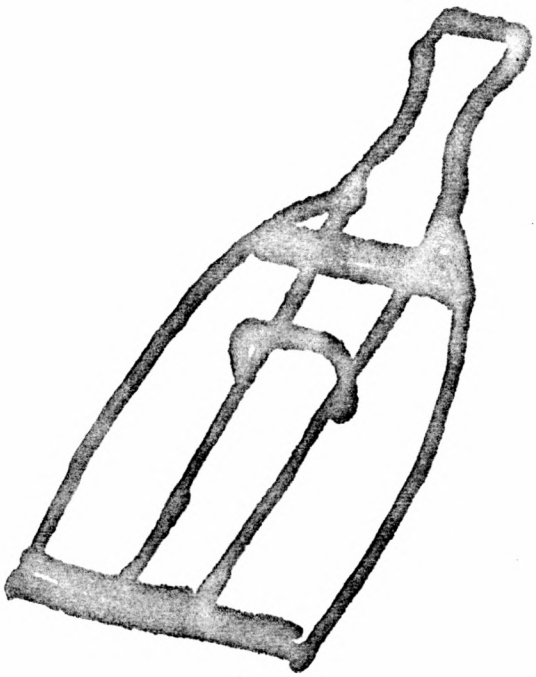


Snow shovel

As the title implies, this was used for the clearing of snow. It was an extended hand for clearing snow in igloo buildings and a tool for clearing ice and snow from equipment. The materials ~~available were the materials~~ used for it's construction. Bone, antler, wood, sinew all were ~~materials~~ considered.

this time it's "its"





TOOLS

Bow Drill

The bow drill was the most important implement for working in ivory or bone. It consisted of three parts: the bow was of bone, generally the rib of a musk-ox or caribou; a hole was drilled in each end for the attachment of the cord (sealskin or sinew). The stem or spindle was usually of wood, though bone was used occasionally and ivory when it was procurable. To prevent the spindle from splitting, the ends were reinforced by a ring or cap of bone, antler or musk-ox horn, and often by a tight serving of sinew. Metal drill points were the most serviceable but hard to come by. Stone was always available and recognized as basic material for this purpose. The most common mouthpiece was the ankle bone of the caribou, though any piece of bone, antler or even soapstone was shaped to serve almost as well.

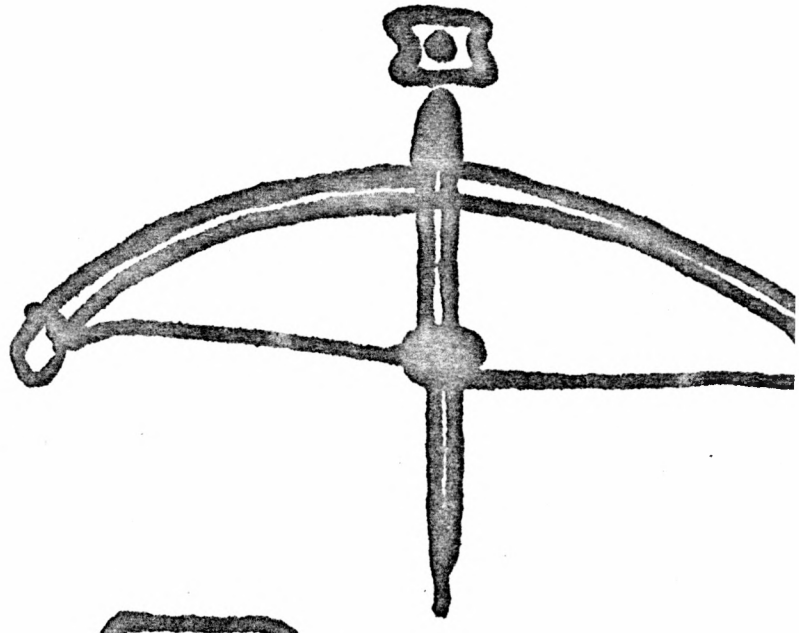
The string (cord) of the bow is twisted around the shaft of the drill, the mouthpiece is firmly held between the teeth, and the rounded end of the drill is placed in the recess of the mouthpiece. The point of the drill is pressed against the place to be perforated and the spindle (shaft) set in motion by moving the bow back and forth horizontally. Instead of the bow, a string is sometimes used with a handle at each end. For one man, however, the first device is handier. The string of the latter form is usually pulled by one man while the other holds the mouthpiece.

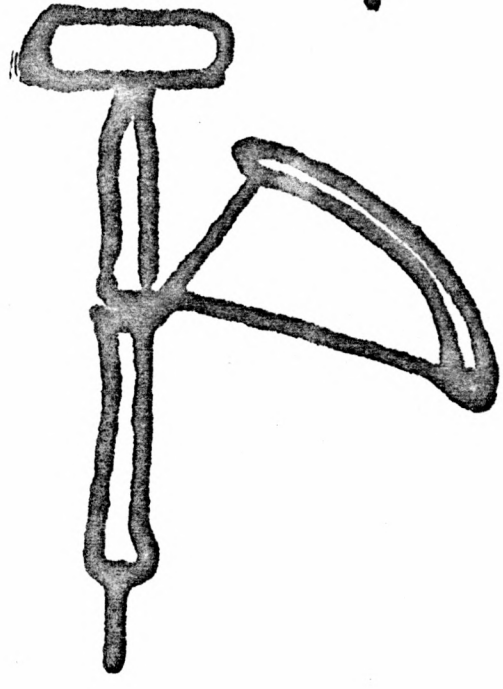
The same instrument was sometimes used for making fire. A piece of hardwood (ground willow) was used as a spindle, the point of which was rotated rapidly in a round slot gouged in softer material usually driftwood until it began to glow. A little dry moss was applied to the glowing wood and gently blown into a flame.

C.R.

Approximate dimensions-:-

Bow - 12 inches long, 5/8 inch wide
Spindle - 7 inches long, 3/4 inch diameter
Cord - 3/16" flat sealskin or flat braided sinew.





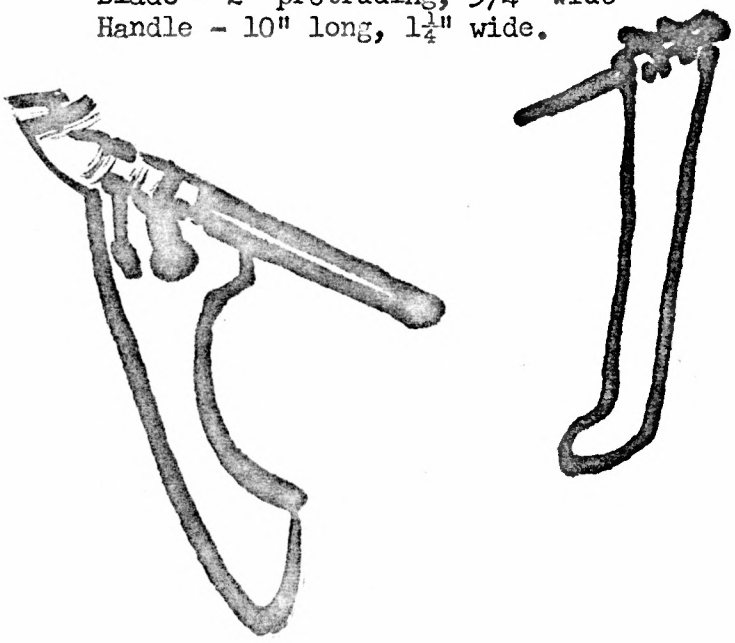
Adze

Invariably an iron or some other type of hard metal blade inserted or notched into a head of wood or musk-ox horn, and sometimes grooved into a piece of stone. The head and blade were lashed at right angles to the end of an antler through one or two holes drilled vertically. The head in most cases was not drilled for the lashing but widely notched to answer the same purpose. Where the lashing did not directly touch the blade which was securely fixed by other means into the head, holes were bored through the head for lashing to the handle. A piece of antler was selected for a handle with an inward turn at the butt to allow for a better grip. The handle was also sometimes deeply scored to provide a firmer grasp. The adze was originally of stone shaped in one piece and was used to cut softer material such as wood, bone, antler or ivory. As soon as metal became available it was generally accepted as the best cutting agent and was adapted as the integral component of the tool.

CR

Approximate dimensions:

Head - 4" long, 2" wide
Blade - 2" protruding, 3/4" wide
Handle - 10" long, 1¼" wide.



Hand Chisel

Used for cutting grooves in bone, antler and horn. The blade which was nicked at the end or else bore a sharp, painted projection, was mounted or an antler handle of no particular shape or design. Sometimes, the handle was split for the insertion of the blade, other times the blade was simply driven in with a stone, and inverted or not, according to the owner's fancy.

CR

Approximate dimensions-:-

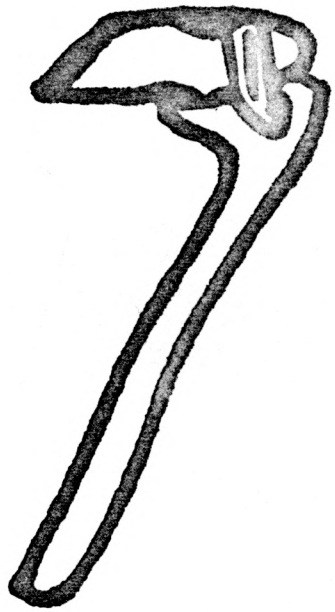
Blade - $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide
Handle - 6 inches long, 1 inch wide.

Mattock

The typical mattock was simply an unmounted piece of caribou antler with a sharpened point and a butt crudely shaped to give a grip. A curving prong of antler forming nearly an acute angle with the handle was a more efficient tool. A piece from a whale rib was sometimes used by the coastal Eskimos. Mattocks were seldom required except for two purposes, to secure, in the autumn, mud for the runners of sleds and to make shallow pits where the hunter could await unseen the approaching caribou. Although it was never recognized as a general tool yet no caribou hunter's equipment was quite complete without one. Where material - whale bone or antler - was available very little time or effort was required to shape and prepare this instrument.

Approximate dimensions:

Variable lengths and thicknesses. Quite long at a minimum in order to be operated using both hands and usually the thickest antler to be found was selected.



Splitting Knife

A simple implement crudely made. It consists of a short piece of metal inserted into a slightly bent handle of antler. It has either a half round notch or saw teeth at the point. It is used for splitting and engraving relatively soft material such as antler, bone and ivory.

Approximate dimensions-:- C R

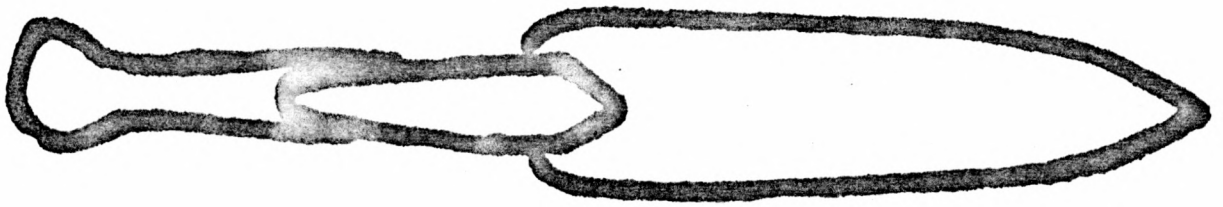
Blade - 1" long, 3/4" wide
Handle - 5" long, 1¼" wide.

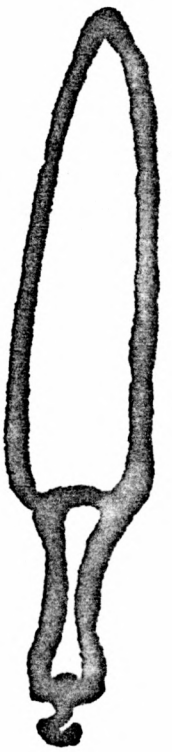
Man's Knife

The most useful form of this implement was the two edged lanceolate type. Generally, the tang extending from the blade was driven into an antler handle without being riveted. The blade preferably was made of metal, the hardest and most finely tempered to be found. The edge was honed on both sides and usually kept at razor keen sharpness. The handle was sometimes of two pieces, spliced together and riveted with metal or bone pegs. Sometimes a butt was attached of a separate piece of bone or musk-ox horn. A lashing of sealskin or willow root, which began through a hole in the butt was wrapped around most of the handle which afforded a better grip than the smooth antler; its loose end was passed through another hole and was tucked under one or more of the lashings. A short loop of sealskin was often added to the handle for convenience in carrying or hanging out of the way when not in use. As better material became available, a more improved type of knife was devised. Recent models are more symmetrical in design and construction with the hilt of hardwood, shaped to display a guard at its base to afford a firmer thrust and also to prevent the fingers from slipping in over the sharp edges. A scabbard of wood or tanned sealskin is now invariably used to protect the blade. A pice of a handsaw was the most popular material for making this sort of knife. The man's knife was mostly used for dissecting and skinning.

Approximate dimensions-:-

Blade - 8" long, 2" wide rounding to a point
Handle - 5" long, 1½" wide.





Whittling Knife

The whittling knife has a short, often bent blade and a long slightly curved handle. The blade has a straight back with also a slightly curved edge. The metal blade is usually slotted into the antler handle and held securely by two or three metal rivets. Often the handle is perforated about half-way along its length for the attachment of the sharpener which is usually of steel mounted on an antler handle. The knife is held low down with the hand directed inward, and the handle resting along the inner side of the forearm so that it is fitted into the curve of the elbow. With the instrument thus pivoted on the elbow the forearm is moved as one unit while the wrist remains perfectly still. Small whittling knives, even though their handles did not reach the elbow, were held in the same manner.

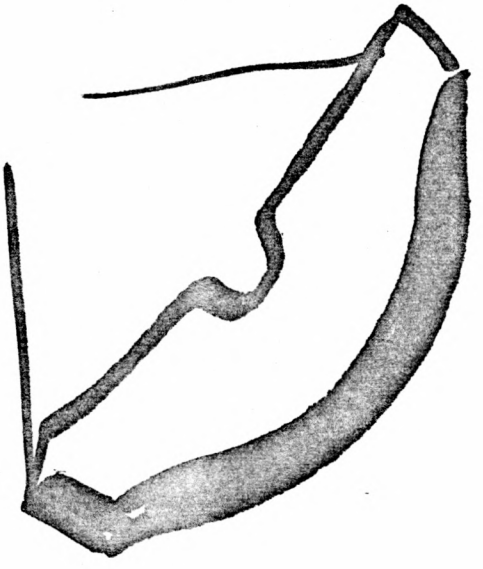
Approximate dimensions- 2/3

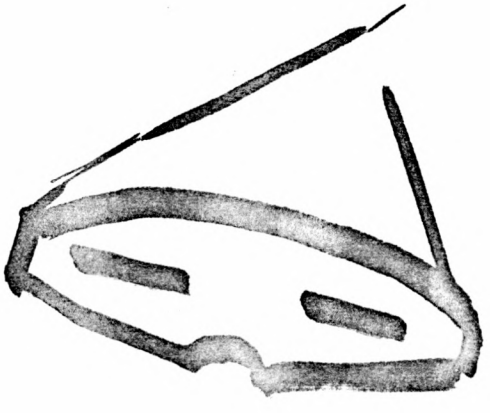
Blade - 3" long 3/4" wide tapering to a point
Handle - 12" long 3/4" wide.

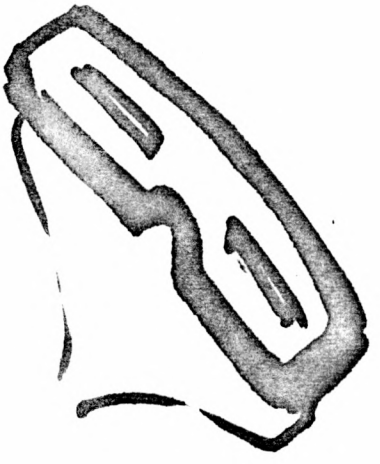
TRANSPORTATION

Snow Goggles

In order to prevent snow blindness, goggles made from wood, were worn by the men during the spring months. For some reason the women were reported not to wear them. Even now, when the men wear glasses to shield their eyes from the glaring spring snow, the women indifferently suffer without complaining. The portion of the goggles adjacent to the face were grooved out and charred or blackened. The immediate area about the eyes was also darkened. It was, of course, essential that the eye slits were very narrow and that the goggles fitted well to the face by a thong about the head. LC



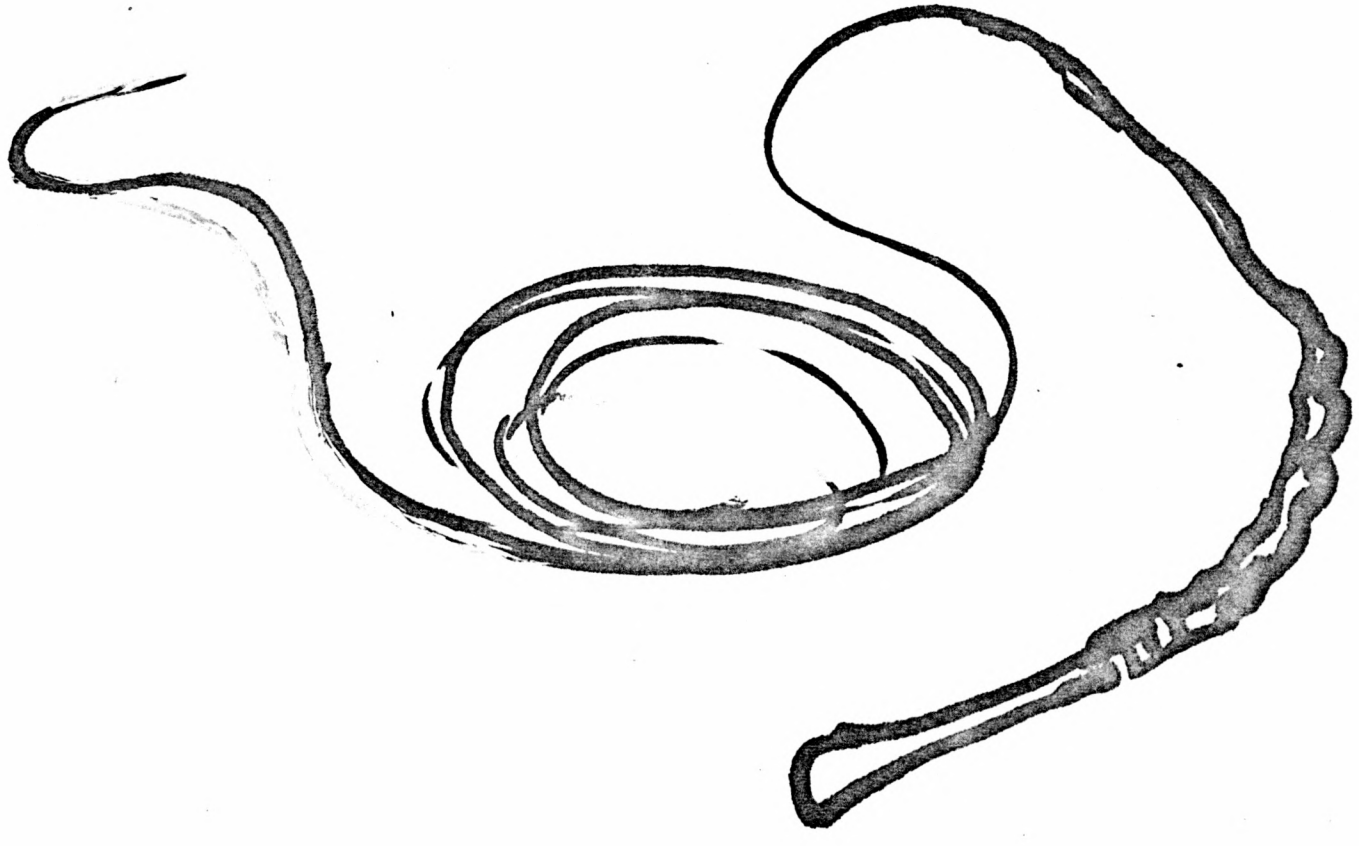




Dog whip

This piece of the hunters kit was used deftly in varied degrees depending on locality. There were areas where whips were not used at all and other regions of the arctic where very long whips were used. Whips were used to force dogs to remain down and still while the hunter's partner stalked a seal. Braided or bound square flipper thongs were bound to a wood, bone, or antler handle.

As with traces, harnesses the whips were often eaten by the dogs when left accessible or unguarded. Baffin Island Inuit had and many still use whips with one foot handle and eighteen to twenty four foot lashes. The Keewatin whips are noted to be longer. LC

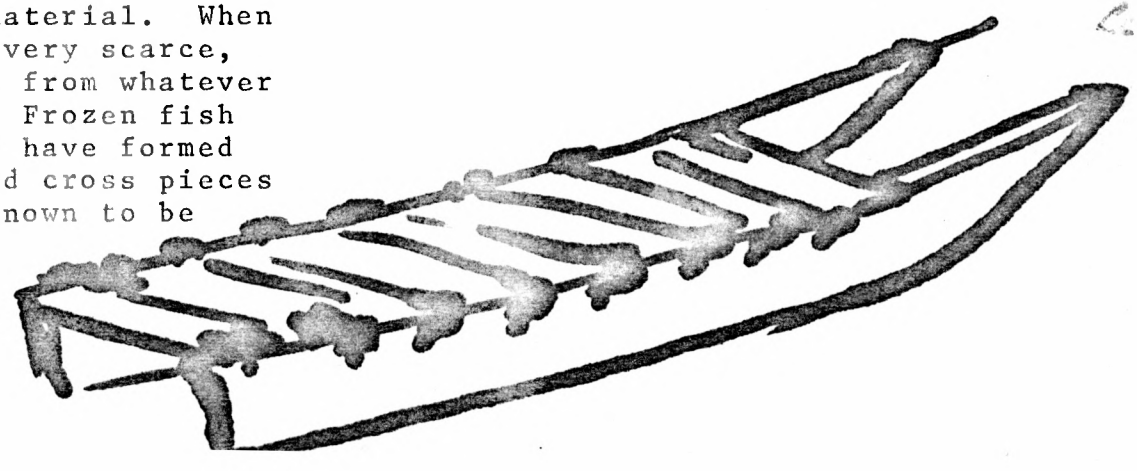


Sled

An explorer in the 1700's described the sled as being shod or lined with bones. Two spruce planks each twenty one feet long and fourteen inches broad, two inches thick were the runners. Boards of eighteen inches long were set three to four inches apart. The upper end of the runner was shod with the jaw bone of a whale. The shodding was cut in two or three feet, half an inch thick fastened with pegs. The wood work was sewn together with split whalebone. It was said that Clyde River, Eastern Arctic sledges were at one time made altogether of bone from the right and left part of the jaw of the large young whale. Early sleds used runners formed from jaw bones. The sides, ribs of the animal were the cross pieces and caribou horns formed the uprights of the handles. The bottoms of the runners were covered with a mixture of moss, earth and water which soon froze to a depth of approximately two inches in winter. After this came the final process of plating the surface.

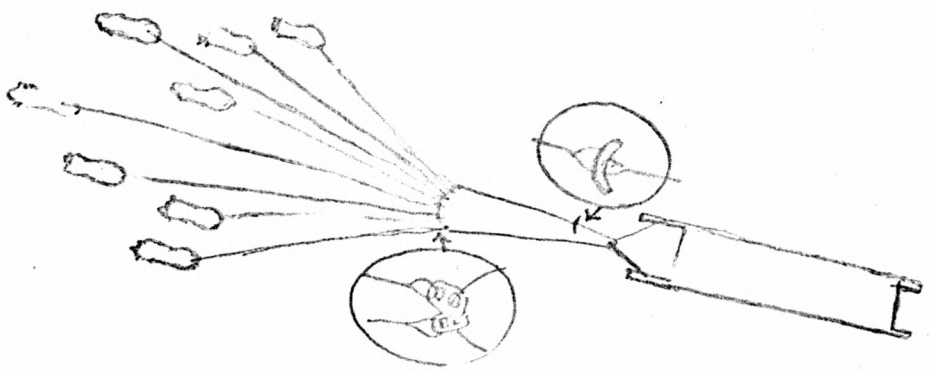
The sled operator took some water in his mouth and when mixed with saliva, spit it on a scrap of bearskin, making a rough brush which he gradually rubbed over the runner till a coating of a half an inch thick was produced which then had a more than usual degree of tenacity and was more slippery than ordinary material. When materials were very scarce, sleds were made from whatever was available. Frozen fish wrapped in skin have formed sled runners and cross pieces and have been known to be eaten in the spring. A general rule for the proportional dimensions of the sled was that of the mans' foot length to its width. Todays komatiks are constructed of wood. The runners shod with frozen mud, porridge or other such material, filed smooth and water polished in the winter. In the spring the runners are usually shod with iron. The komatik is bound together with thick twine or parachute cord. A grub box is attached to the front of the komatik. The sled is not rigidly constructed but is bound together so that it will work, twist, shift as its crosspieces as it twists, turns, smashes down on the rough ice. The load is lashed down by ropes running over it through ropes passing over and under the crosspieces. Komatiks are built in various sizes. Some are large enough to carry a whale boat, or all of a large families belongings; others are only large enough to accommodate a pair of hunters. Travel by komatik (sled) pulled by several dogs is an effective means of travel today. It still requires skill, patience and courage to manage a sled over thin ice, open cracks and through rough ice.

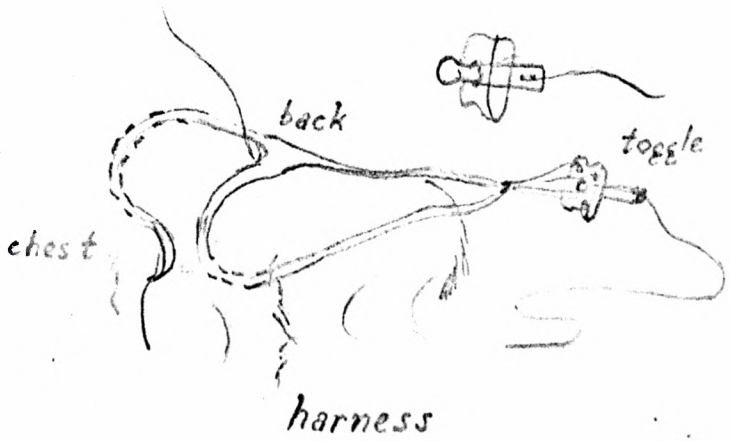
Today there are a great number of different opinions regarding motor snow toboggans such as the skiddo and snowcruiser and whether they will totally replace the dog and sled in the arctic.



Traces and hitches

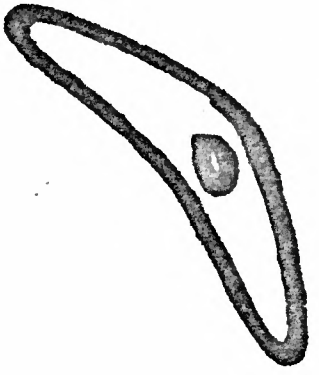
The central and eastern arctic used the fan hitch as opposed to the tandem and file hitch used in the west. The fan hitch allowed each individual dog to pick its way through rough ice, unhampered, and at the same time allowed the driver to identify the dogs not pulling their load. Rather than the whole outfit dropping through the ice one or more dogs having fallen in might be rescued. The individual traces fan out at varied lengths from a bridle attached to the komatik. This exists in the east; in the Quebec region the fan stems from a single line attached to a short bridle on the komatik. LC





Toggles

The present Eastern arctic fan hitch toggles are made in the form of a half moon with a hole in the widest part to accommodate the bridle end. These are an example of functional simplicity and beautiful form were developed in bone, ivory or antler. LC



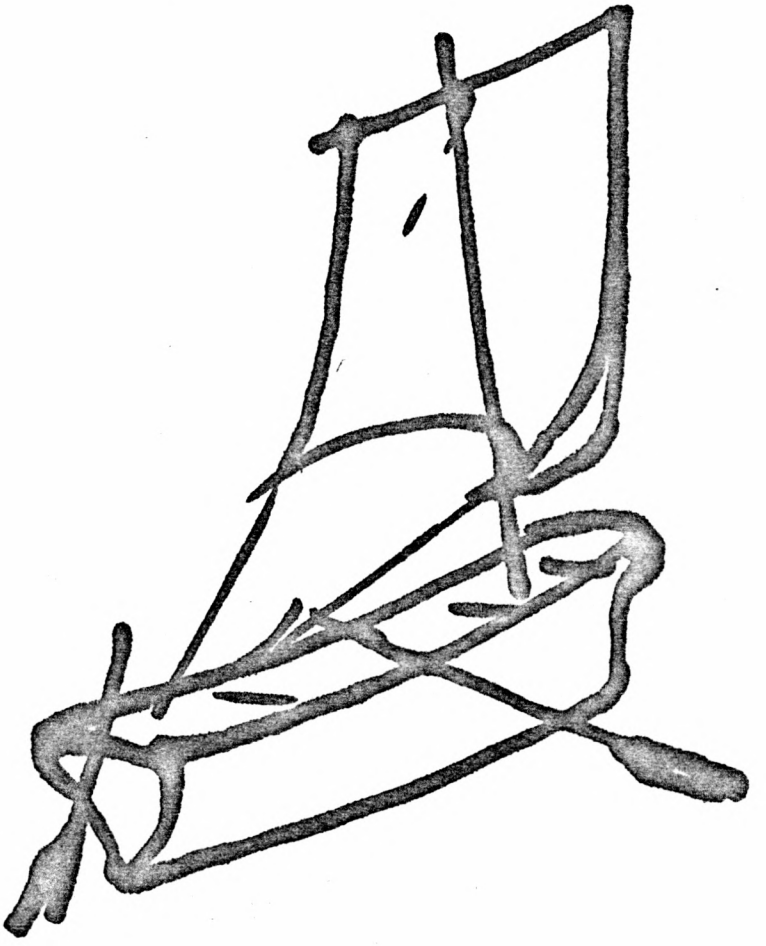
Water bag

In order to be able to renew the ice shodding on the runners when on the trail. Its been said the Inuit usually took a small water bag which if a woman was along, would carry in her parka hood if she had no small child at the time. It was made of sealskin joined in one seam along one side with a narrow neck or from a seal bladder. LC

Umiak (family skin boat)

The family boat was from twenty to twenty-five feet long approximately by eight feet board and was capable of accommodating twenty or more persons. Two types existed. The western umiak was slightly pointed at the end and usually was propelled by men. In the East around the Hudson's Straits it was usually navigated by women. The north baffin people, who were not known for using the skin boat as such, copied the whaler's boat. The women in the East used rudely shaped oars and rowed facing the stern.

Generally the boat was covered with walrus or square flipper seal. The Hudson's Strait and Greenlander umiak was flat sided about three feet high and square to the bown and stern. It contained five to six seats secured to the gunwhale by thongs. No nails were used. Thongs bound the frame together. The lug shaped sail was formed of about four strips of walrus gut sewn together with great care. It weighed about three to four pounds. The mast placed well forward was wood and was neatly formed having an ivory sheave for the halyards to run on. Baffin Eskimos and Quebec Eskimos have been known to cross the Hudson's Straits, the Baffin Inuit, for wood. All of the family belongings, including the dogs have been known to be carried in this skin boat.



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Kayak

The Eskimo seal hunters of the Central and Eastern Arctic had probably the best constructed kayaks throughout the whole northern regions. Long and narrow, tapering to points at both ends, usually 21 feet in length by 22 inches wide by 9 to 10 inches deep (width and depth maximum at the cockpit section). Bows and sterns were practically straight and the deck level, except for the high tapered coming forward of the manhole. The keel rises gradually from about three-quarters of its length at either end toward the stem and stern with a minimum of sheer. The gunwale meets and protrudes at the bow about 8 inches while the stern part ends more abruptly. The framework consists, first, of two flat pieces of wood which form the gunwale. From ten to twenty beams (crossbars) keep this frame on a stretch above. The greatest width between the gunwales is a little behind the cockpit. A strong piece of wood runs from the cross piece before the manhole to the stern, from the cross piece before the manhole to the stem and another from the cross piece abaft the hole to the stern. The proportion of the bow and to the stern end, measured from the centre of the cockpit, is 4 to 3. The former has a projection measuring one-fourth of its whole length. Setting aside the projection, the manhole lies in the very centre of the body of the kayak. A large number of ribs, from thirty to sixty are fastened to the gunwales and kept in place by a keel, which runs from stern to stern, and by two lateral strips of wood fastened between gunwale and keel. The stern projection which rises gradually, begins at a strong beam (bottom) and its rib. The extreme end of the stern is bent upward. The bottom of the boat is partly formed by the keel, partly by the side supports. The stern projection has a keel, but in the body of the boat the side supports are bent down to the depth of the keel thus forming a flat bottom. Rising again gradually they terminate close to the stern. The manhole of the kayak is formed by a flat piece of wood or whalebone bent into a hoop. The forward beam on which the hoop rests is roundly built up to slant the manhole at an angle of about 30 degrees. The whole framework is held together by lashing with sealskin line. In appropriate places holes are bored in gunwales, beams, keel and supports and then lashed with partially dried sealskin line. The shrinkage of the line as it dries binds the joints together very securely. Finally, the frame is covered with sealskins tightly sewn together and made waterproof. The skins are usually from the adult bearded seal with hair and grease (fat) completely removed. These are sewn on in their green state, and as with the same idea of the partially dry lashings, as the skins dry the whole structure is more firmly bound together as one unit. Four straps are placed in the top part (deck) of the kayak for securing hunting implements and tying down any game being carried. A strap each to the front and rear of the cockpit also one at the front end and one at the stern. Those straps are made fast at the sides and drawn tight across the surface from one side to the other. In addition to the straps there are several loops attached to the top covering for placing weapons conveniently in reach. Paddles (double bladed and stalking), paddle rest and harpoon live tub although separate items are considered so essential that the construction of a kayak is never recognized as being complete without them. An expertly built kayak presents an appearance of symmetry and smoothness seldom equalled by any other water-craft in existence. Skin coverings will last, with care, possibly three years, but any conscientious hunter will strip the frame every spring; tighten or replace lashings, effect necessary repairs to the framework and completely replace the outside covering with fresh sealskins. The kayak ordinarily was employed to kill game, and where possible tow it to the land or to the Umiak. It was never meant to individually carry a heavy load, however, by lashing two together it

was feasible to shift rather extra-ordinary weights short distances as for instance unloading freight from ship to shore. One of the chief characteristics in the process of construction was to cut down on weight. To achieve an overall of sixty pounds was considered the very minimum.

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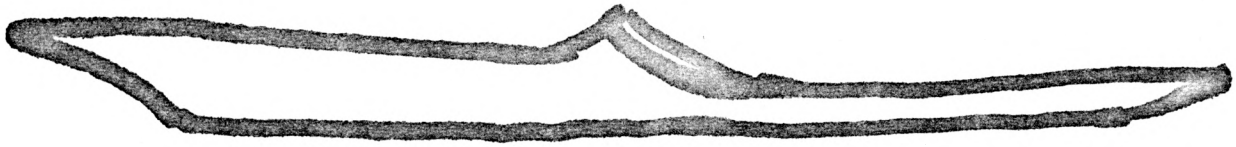

Paddles

Paddles in their original form were crudely constructed in comparison to the more modern type when material (wood) became plentiful. Formerly they were put together with anything and everything - bits and pieces of whalebone, driftwood and antler. By way of distracting from the Hodge-podge appearance ivory was used as much as possible, more for decoration than usefullness. The stalking paddles were invariably the shoulder blades of the larger animals, preferrably the caribou. With a selection of material the double bladed paddle was beautifully shaped and designed becoming a very fitting accessory to complement the kayak. It was slender (almost to the point of fragility) and symmetrical; the contour of the blades and middle section (handle) shaped in proportion to effect a fine balance with the whole implement smoothed to perfection. Two circular concave beads at the bases of the blades, forming the outside parts of the hand grips, into which water stops of seal-skin line were deftly fitted lent a semblance of artistic finish. Ivory inlay along the edge of the blade also greatly enhanced its appearance. The inlay never extended around the point which was so readily phrone to damage by the paddle being often used as a pole in shallow water, and as an aid to steady the kayak in the course of getting in and out. Double bladed paddles were approximately 7 to 8 feet in length by $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches at widest part of blades. The stalking paddles were shaped to fit the hand and were used as a sort of a flipper. They were cupped (concave) and were sometimes manipulated to propel the kayak without taking the paddles out of the water. They were employed solely for warily approaching game. A cord was passed through two holes, one on either side of the wrist which fitted over the hand when in operation. They were carried ready to hand inside the kayak. Stalking paddles measured approximately 15 inches long by 5" wide. The boards were shaved as thin as possible constant with the quality of the material.

Pack bag for dogs

In summer when the country was bare of snow and the dog sleds couldn't be used, the dogs were expected to carry the load. Pack bags made of caribou skin, with the hair removed, were used. The cords of sealskin were tied round the dogs neck and breast. Its been told that even the young pups were seen carrying cups or other small utensils about their necks. L C.

UTENSILS

Bodkin

Bodkins were used for piercing skin. One third was a round shaft and the latter four sided. The head was often in the form of two horns.

Co

Needles

The bone needles were one of the first items to disappear on contact with the Europeans. The thread used was, first and foremost, the back sinews of the caribou, more rarely the back sinew of the narwhale or white whale. LC

Needle Cases

Needle cases were hollow tubular cases or prismatic or cylindrical ones. Usually these were made of ivory. The needles were struck into a strip of skin which was inserted for protection in the needle case and hung on the belt. At the end of the skin strip hung the thimble holder in the form of a cross-pin with a hole in the middle. In this hung the thimble which was a small piece of square flipper seal with a little strap which passed round the finger.

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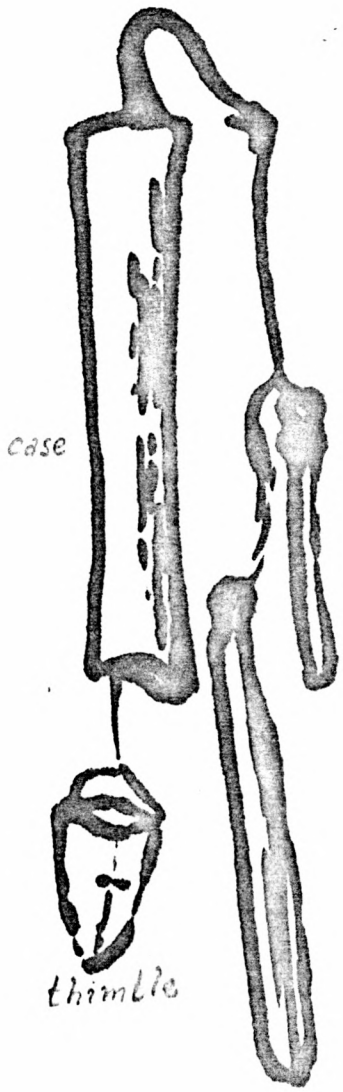


The Scrapers

Stone scrapers were heavy and of black slate with a bent over handle, the edge slightly carved and rather sharp.

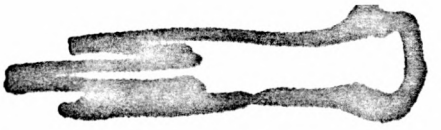
A sharp scraper with an antler handle and rather wide at the upper end with a sharp rather curved blade was used.

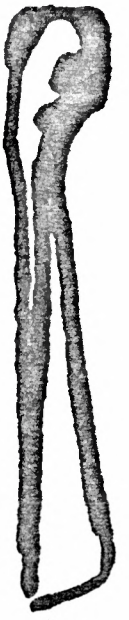
There was a blunt scraper made of musk-ox spatula or other similar bone. The joint head was cut to form a convenient handle.

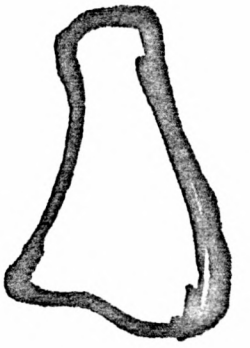
Another type of scraper had a flat wooden handle with a thick rounded back. Inserted into this was an iron blade. It was used for unhairing skin.

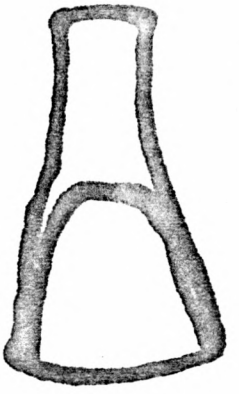
A fat scraper made from a caribou split leg bone had a sharp chisel edge. The joint head was covered by a pad of caribou skin.

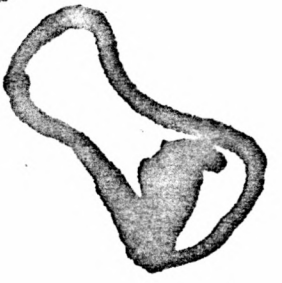
It was used for removing fat from caribou sinew and sometimes used as a small bone knife with a sharp edge. Some of these types are still used by the people today. RC

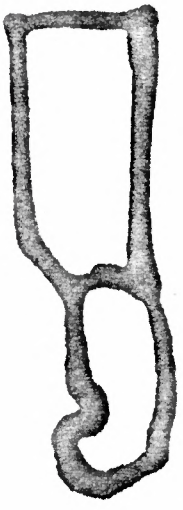


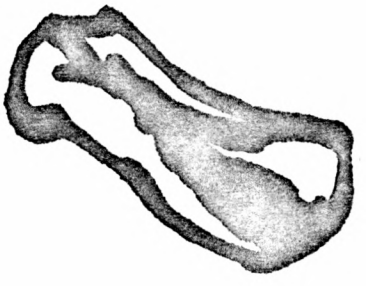


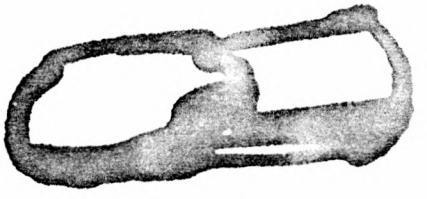






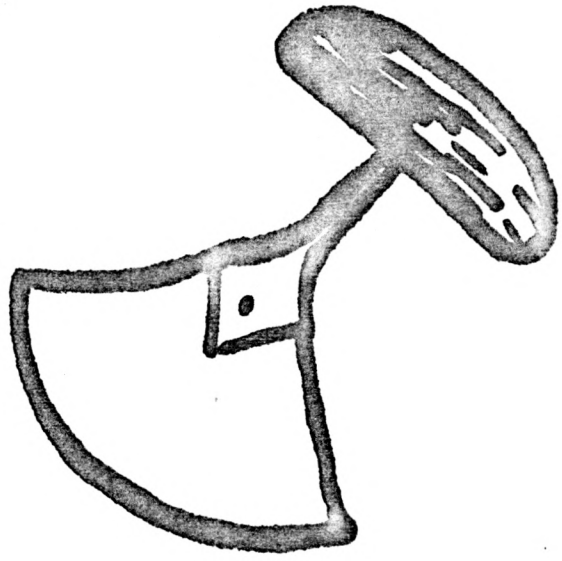


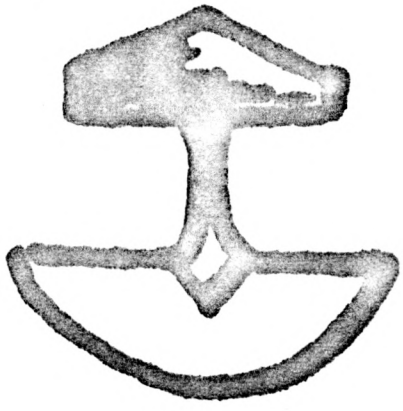




63. Woman's Knife (Uluk)

The uluk is the indispensable implement of the Inuit women. It has various uses for flensing, eating, cutting up skins, scraping the hair off skins, chopping tobacco and lamp moss, chopping up of blocks of ice and cutting sticks of wood. Generally the knife was and still is made of a broken or discarded hand saw blade. It varied slightly in form. It was composed of the handle of wood or bone, a tang and a blade. The latter two parts of iron. This knife, because of its metal requirement was naturally not known in the ancient Inuit cultures in the form we know it today. As a rule each woman has several uluks each with its own purpose. A large one was a knife, a smaller one for skin scraping and sewing, and a little one for chopping moss etc. The uluk was and is held with the tang between the third and fourth finger. When skins are to be cut, the blade is supported with the index finger. If the skins are to be scraped, it is pushed forward in a vertical manner, the second and third finger rested on the upper edge of the blade. Its interesting to note that the saddler's knife, the shoemaker's knife, and the common kitchen chopping knife resemble the uluk.





Coiled Baskets

Common in Alaska, Greenland and Labrador baskets were made from willow root and straw. Above the arctic circle in the East baskets were reported to be rare.

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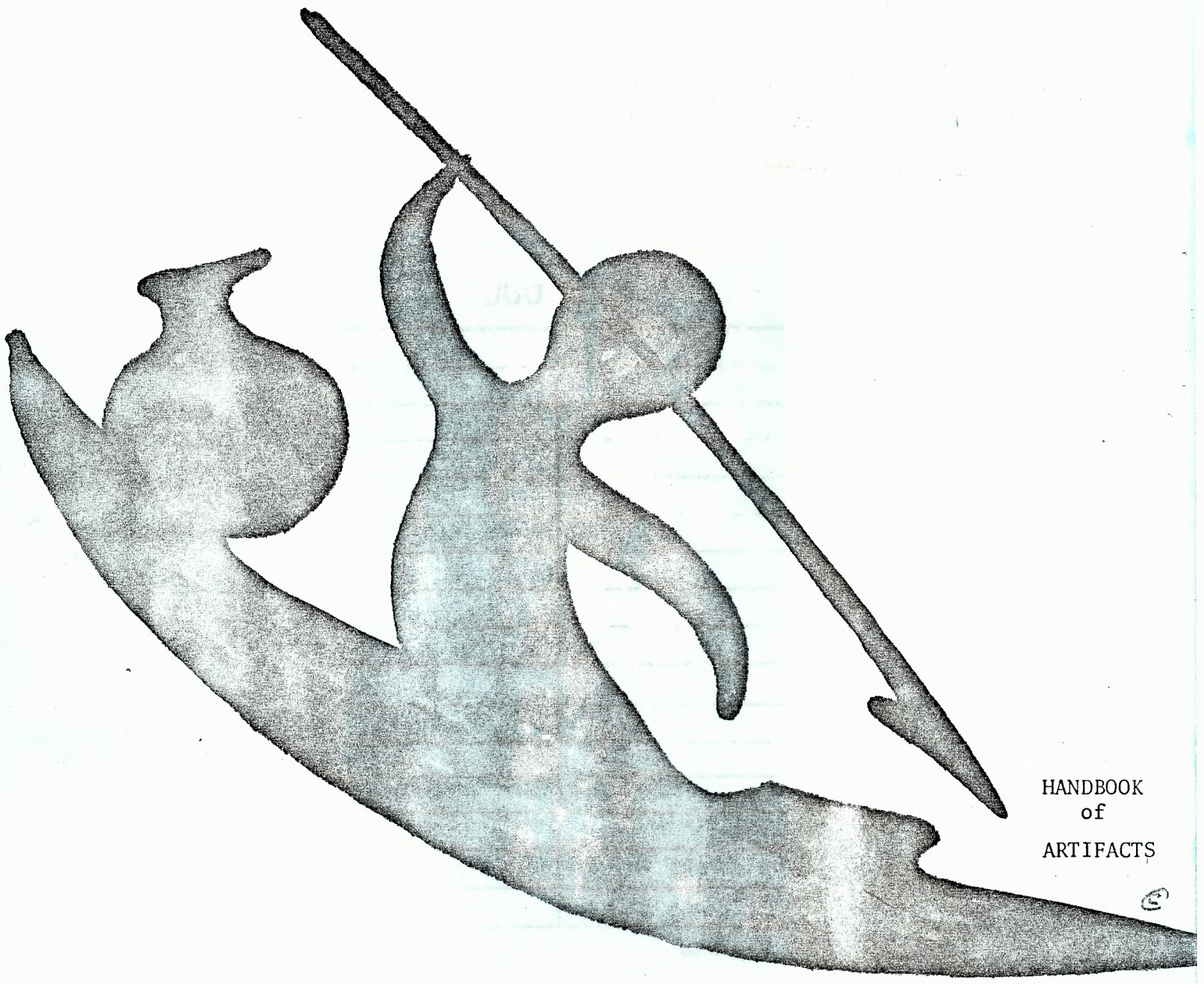

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