

## V.

THE ABERDEEN KAYAK AND ITS CONGENERS. By DAVID  
MACRITCHIE, F.S.A. Scot.

The following observations supplement, to a considerable extent, a paper which I read before the Society many years ago, on the subject of a so-called "Finnish" boat preserved in Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup> At that time I was not aware that a similar boat, with a similar history, was, and is still, preserved in Aberdeen. Indeed, I only became aware of that fact last autumn, which is my excuse for not taking an earlier opportunity of drawing the attention of the Society to its existence.

The species of boat in question is known as a *kayak*. The word *kayak* is here taken in its common acceptation as denoting the long, narrow, skin-covered canoe of the Eskimos. This kind of canoe has other names; and, conversely, the word *kayak* (varying into *kayik* and *kayook*) is sometimes applied to vessels of a different description. But it is useful to employ the word in its commonest sense.

At the present day, the kayak is in use over a great extent of the Arctic regions, from East Greenland westward across Arctic America, and along some 800 miles of the Asiatic coast, both westward and south-westward from Bering Straits.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it is reported at a point very much farther to the west, namely, on the coast of north-east Russia, beside Vaygatz Island. Stephen Burrough, the English traveller, who visited that coast in 1556, has furnished us with an account of the natives, in the course of which he says: "Their boats are made of deers' skins, and when they come on shore they carry their boats with them upon their backs."<sup>2</sup> This statement would

<sup>1</sup> See vol. xxiv. of the *Proceedings*, pp. 353-369.

<sup>2</sup> *Hakluyt*, first edition, p. 318.

apply to existing Eskimos and their kayaks.<sup>1</sup> A century after Burrough, the same coast was visited by a Danish trading expedition, sailing from Copenhagen. The French surgeon of the expedition, who has left a racy account of the voyage, describes how the ships' boats gave chase to a native of this locality whom they saw in his canoe a mile and a half from the shore. "As soon as he saw us coming towards him," says the chronicler, "he rowed with such force that it was impossible for us to get near him. And, on reaching the shore, he, with great swiftness and dexterity, lifted his canoe upon his shoulder, and holding his bow and his spear in the other hand (his quiver being on his back) he sped away." When these two accounts are taken together, it seems fairly evident that the skin kayak is denoted. But there is no doubt whatever in the following description of a canoe, containing a man and a woman, which the Danes captured the same day: "The canoe was made in the style of a gondola (*fait en gondolle*), being 15 or 16 feet long by 2½ feet broad, very cleverly constructed of fish ribs (probably baleen or whalebone), covered with fish skins (? seal-skins) stitched together, thus making the canoe a purse, as it were, from one end to the other. Within it the two were enclosed up to the waist in such a manner that not a single drop of water could get into their little vessel, so that they were enabled to expose themselves to every tempest without any danger."<sup>2</sup>

A very peculiar interest attaches to this record of a two-holed kayak in European waters in the seventeenth century. The two-holed kayak appears to be quite unknown between East Greenland and Alaska, and it is specially associated with the Aleutian Isles. The earliest picture of a two-holed kayak, so far as I know, is that given by Captain Cook (fig. 1), and it only belongs to the latter part

<sup>1</sup> Even the reference to deer-skin is still applicable, although seal-skin is the material commonly used. The Hudson Bay Eskimos employ deer-skin (Hambury's *Sport and Travel in the Northland of Canada*, London, 1904, p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> These references to the canoes seen by the Danish expedition will be found in Martinière's *Voyage des Pais Septentrionaux*, Paris, 1671, pp. 150-153.

of the eighteenth century. That variety was seen by Captain Cook at Unalashka in the Aleutian Isles, and it seems to have been a novelty to him. Yet here we have a word-picture of a hundred years earlier showing the two-holed kayak as in use at that date on the north-east coast of Russia. This variety of kayak, therefore, appears to belong to the Eurasian continent and to the Aleutian Isles; occasionally intruding itself in Alaska as a visitor from the west.

Mention may be made of the harpoon-points found in Lapland, at

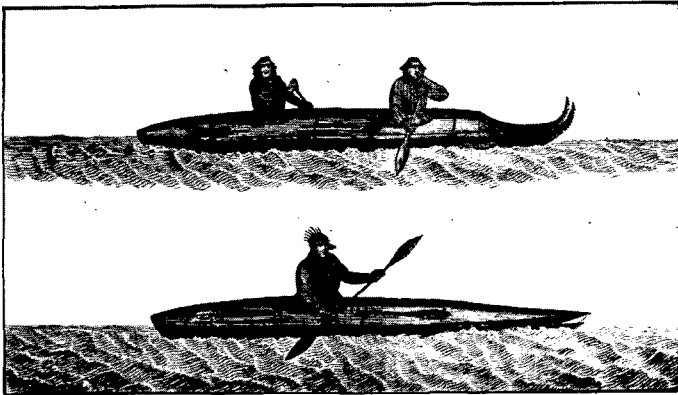


Fig. 1. Two Aleutian Kayaks, single and double, eighteenth century.

Kjelmö, on the south side of the Varanger Fiord. "Some of these harpoon-points resemble old primitive Eskimo forms, which are found in Greenland," observes Dr Nansen. He adds that they are remarkably small, and could not have been used for any animal larger than a seal. He further states that, "nothing has been found which might afford us information as to the kind of boats these northern sealers used."<sup>1</sup> It would not be surprising if they were of the same description as the skin kayaks of the Archangel coast, but, on the other hand, they might have been wooden boats. Nevertheless, the existence of

<sup>1</sup> *In Northern Mists*, London, 1911, pp. 215-216.

these harpoon-points on the south side of the Varanger Fiord, and their resemblance to old Eskimo forms, may be appropriately kept in view.

Contemporaneous with the kayaks of the North Russian coast are certain indubitable kayaks reported from Northern Scotland. One of these is the specimen preserved in Aberdeen. It is stated to have been captured near the Aberdeenshire coast, and it is now in the Anthropological Museum, Marischal College, University of Aberdeen. Its history is given by Francis Douglas in his *General Description of the East Coast of Scotland* (Paisley, 1782). At the time of Douglas's visit to Aberdeen, the kayak was preserved in the Library of Marischal College, along with other curiosities, and he thus refers to it in giving a summary of the objects that specially attracted his attention :—

“ A Canoe taken at sea, with an Indian man in it, about the beginning of this century.<sup>1</sup> He was brought alive to Aberdeen, but died soon after his arrival, and could give no account of himself. He is supposed to have come from the Labrador coast, and to have lost his way at sea. The canoe is covered with fish skins, curiously stretched upon slight timbers very securely joined together. The upper part of it is about 20 inches broad at the centre, and runs off gradually to a point at both ends. Where broadest there is a circular hole, just large enough for the man to sit in, round which there is a kind of girth, about a foot high, to which he fixed himself, probably when he did not use his oar, or paddle ; which, when he chose it, he stuck into some lists of skin tied round the canoe, but slack enough to let in the paddle and some other awkward utensils which were found stuck there. The canoe is about 18 feet long, and slopes on both sides, but the

<sup>1</sup> It may be pointed out that in the second edition of Douglas's book, published in 1826, no editorial notice is taken of the words “ this century.” Readers of that edition who are unaware that Douglas wrote the words about the year 1782, when his book first appeared, will naturally fall into the mistake of supposing that the period referred to is about the beginning of the nineteenth century.

bottom is flat for 3 or 4 inches in the middle, and gradually sharpens as it approaches the extremities till it ends in a point."

The general correctness of the measurements given by Douglas is confirmed by Professor Reid of Aberdeen University, who has favoured me with the following precise and detailed account of the kayak and the implements belonging to it:—

DESCRIPTION OF KAYAK PRESERVED IN THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN. By R. W. REID, Professor of Anatomy and Curator of the Anthropological Museum.

The general appearance of the *kayak* is well seen in the accompanying illustrations (fig. 2). It measures 5400 mm. (17 ft. 9 in.) in length, 450 mm. (1 ft. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.) in its greatest breadth, and 230 mm. (9 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.) in its greatest depth. It weighs, without implements, 15.4 kilograms (34 pounds). Its bottom is flat excepting for the distance of about 760 mm. (2 ft. 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  in.) from its bow, and 660 mm. (2 ft. 2 in.) from its stern, where it gradually rises to the pointed ends of the kayak. The deck is flat with the exception of the extremities, which are very slightly elevated, and it presents a little behind its middle a nearly circular aperture—manhole—measuring 400 mm. (1 ft. 3 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.) in its anteroposterior, and 385 mm. (1 ft.) in its transverse diameters respectively. Immediately behind the manhole are two strips of hide, each of an average diameter of 6 mm. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in.), attached to the margins of the kayak and crossing the upper surface of the deck. The strips are arranged in such a way that the one next the manhole passes through a slit in the one next the stern, so as to give the general appearance of a crossing in the middle line 205 mm. (8 $\frac{1}{10}$  in.) behind the manhole. About 450 mm. (1 ft. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.) in front of the manhole a single strip of hide, attached to the edges of the boat, crosses the deck transversely.

The kayak is made of four seal skins stretched over a slender framework of wood. The skins have their subcutaneous surfaces next to the cavity of the kayak. Their edges are overlapped and sewed together with strips of tendon in such a way as to produce a neat, smooth, flat, and very strong seam. The only seams in the bottom and sides of the kayak are those which join the skins transversely. Seams in other directions, chiefly longitudinal, exist in the deck only. The framework is made of pieces of redwood, which

average about 27 mm. ( $1\frac{1}{10}$  in.) in breadth by 19 mm. ( $\frac{19}{8}$  in.) in thickness, and are lashed together by strips of whalebone and hide.

Bounding the manhole is a wooden girth which was inserted in 1900 to replace the original girth, which had become so decayed that it crumbled away. It is lashed to the adjacent seal-skin deck by a hempen rope, which at the same date was inserted to replace the original strip of hide which had been used for the purpose. Three pieces of timber are seen through the manhole with iron nails piercing one of them. These are not the original timbers, but were also inserted in 1900 in order to strengthen the framework of the kayak.

With the kayak are a *paddle*, a spear, a bird-spear, a throwing-stick, and a harpoon. All are made of redwood with bone and ivory mountings.

The *paddle* is 1900 mm. (6 ft.  $2\frac{3}{4}$  in.) long and 65 mm. ( $2\frac{5}{8}$  in.) in its greatest breadth. It consists of two halves which overlap one another for the distance of 605 mm. (1 ft.  $11\frac{7}{8}$  in.), and so form the handle. The plane of the overlap is at right angles to the plane of the blades. The two halves are joined together by seven wooden pegs and by a strip of whalebone about 5 mm. ( $\frac{1}{5}$  in.) in breadth wound spirally round so as to make a lashing 110 mm. ( $4\frac{2}{5}$  in.) long at either end of the handle. The wooden pegs average about 4 mm. ( $\frac{3}{8}$  in.) in diameter. One blade shows a bone tip and incomplete bone edging. The other is somewhat broken, but remains of bone edging still exist. The greatest thickness of the bone edging is 4 mm. ( $\frac{3}{10}$  in.), and the greatest width is 5 mm. ( $\frac{1}{5}$  in.). In one paddle a strip of bone, whose greatest breadth is 11 mm. ( $\frac{9}{10}$  in.), has been attached for the purpose of making good a deficiency in the wooden part of the blade. The bone tip receives the end of the blade in a socket, the two being secured by two ivory pegs. The greatest breadth of the tip is 68 mm. ( $2\frac{7}{10}$  in.), the greatest length 34 mm. ( $1\frac{3}{10}$  in.), and the greatest thickness 9 mm. ( $\frac{9}{10}$  in.).

The *spear* is complete, and shows a shaft in redwood 1670 mm. (5 ft.  $5\frac{3}{4}$  in.) long, and 45 mm. ( $1\frac{4}{5}$  in.) in greatest width. It is somewhat laterally compressed excepting in front end, where it presents a more circular outline. A bone finger-rest about 48 mm. ( $1\frac{9}{10}$  in.) long, 15 mm. ( $\frac{3}{5}$  in.) broad, and 6 mm. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in.) thick projects slightly backwards from the rounded edge of the shaft, 908 mm. (2 ft.  $11\frac{3}{4}$  in.) from the butt end. To the head of the shaft is attached by four ivory pegs, each 5 mm. ( $\frac{1}{5}$  in.) in diameter, a plate of bone measuring 50 mm. (2 in.) by 45 mm. ( $1\frac{4}{5}$  in.) and 9 mm. ( $\frac{2}{5}$  in.) thick. In the centre of this plate is a shallow, circular socket 7 mm. ( $\frac{3}{10}$  in.) in diameter, in

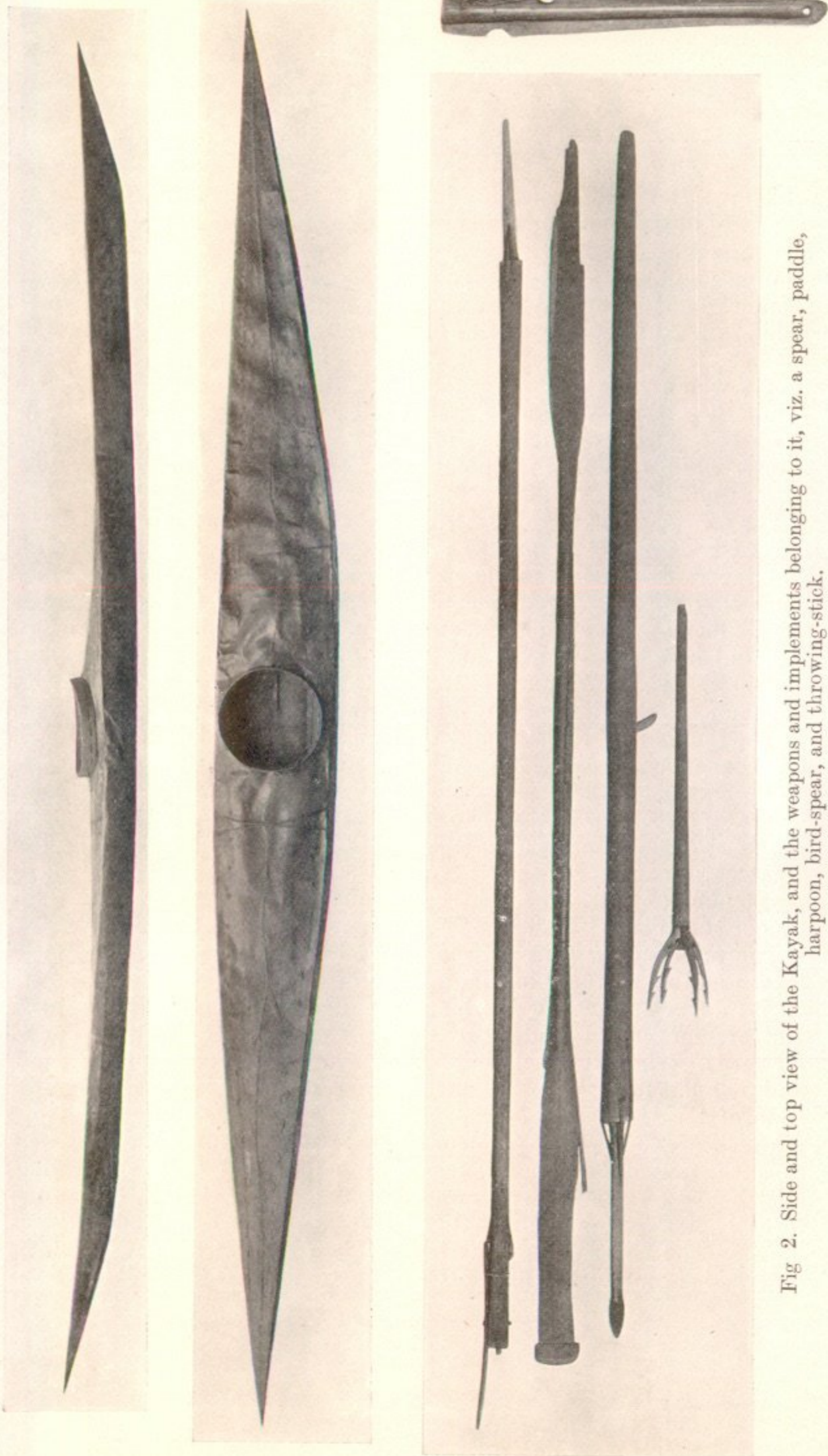


Fig 2. Side and top view of the Kayak, and the weapons and implements belonging to it, viz. a spear, paddle, harpoon, bird-spear, and throwing-stick.

which rests a nipple projecting from the base of the head of the spear. The head of the spear is made of one piece of bone, and, like the shaft, is compressed laterally. It measures 278 mm. (11 in.) in length, 25 mm. (1 in.) in greatest breadth, and 17 mm. ( $\frac{7}{10}$  in.) in greatest thickness. It is moveable on the shaft, but lashed to it by a strip of hide arranged in such a way as to permit of the nipple on the base of the head freeing itself from the socket on the head of the shaft. The nipple which rests in the socket on the head of the shaft measures 7 mm. ( $\frac{3}{10}$  in.) in diameter, and projects 2 mm. ( $\frac{1}{2}$  in.). A leaf-shaped tip of iron, 73 mm. ( $2\frac{9}{10}$  in.) by 34 mm. ( $1\frac{3}{10}$  in.) by 3 mm. ( $\frac{1}{8}$  in.), is inserted into a slot in the point of the head, and retained in position by an iron rivet.

The *bird-spear* is incomplete, the part of the shaft in front of the barbed bone points being absent. The shaft is in redwood, rounded, and tapers towards the butt which is surmounted by a small ivory plate slightly excavated upon its free surface. The portion of the shaft which at present measures 542 mm. (1 ft. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.) in length, 28 mm. ( $1\frac{1}{10}$  in.) in its greatest diameter, and 12 mm. ( $\frac{1}{2}$  in.) in its smallest diameter. The ivory plate is 13 mm. ( $\frac{1}{2}\frac{3}{5}$  in.) in its greatest diameter, 11 mm. ( $\frac{9}{20}$  in.) in its smallest diameter, and 5 mm. ( $\frac{1}{3}$  in.) in thickness. To the fore part of this incomplete shaft are lashed, at equal distances, four bone points diverging from one another so that the diameter of the circle in which their tips lie is 95 mm. ( $3\frac{4}{5}$  in.). Each point measures 128 mm. ( $5\frac{1}{10}$  in.) long, is flattened, curved outwards, and shows two barbs projecting backwards from its inner border. The greatest breadth of each point is 15 mm. ( $\frac{3}{4}$  in.), and the greatest thickness 6 mm. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in.). The points are bound together and to the shaft by cords of plaited tendon.

The *throwing-stick*, in redwood, measures 482 mm. (1 ft. 7 in.) in length and 65 mm. ( $2\frac{2}{5}$  in.) in greatest breadth. It is deeply grooved on its upper surface for the lodgment of the shaft of the bird-spear, and presents at its hinder end an ivory pin projecting upwards and forwards. The pin is held in position by a lashing of strips of tendon and by a flat four-sided bony plate, secured by ivory pegs to the upper edge of the throwing-stick immediately behind the pin. The ivory pin measures 19 mm. ( $\frac{1}{2}\frac{9}{5}$  in.) in length, 9 mm. ( $\frac{9}{5}$  in.) in its greatest breadth, and 5 mm. in thickness. The fore part of the throwing-stick shows on one border a notch in which the right thumb can comfortably lie, and on the opposite border a rounded hole admitting a finger. The hole measures about 20 mm. ( $\frac{4}{5}$  in.) in diameter, and its outer side is completed by a plate of bone attached to the edge of the



throwing-stick by four ivory pegs. The plate of bone measures 94 mm. ( $3\frac{7}{10}$  in.) long, 11 mm. ( $\frac{11}{25}$  in.) in greatest breadth, and 6 mm. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in.) in greatest thickness. A splitting in the wood which runs from the finger-opening to the end of the stick has been repaired by three cross-bands of bone. Two of these bands, each measuring 35 mm. ( $1\frac{3}{5}$  in.) by 6 mm. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in.), are sunk and fixed to the under surface of the throwing-stick by four ivory pegs. The other band is fixed by four ivory pegs and accurately adapted to the end of the throwing-stick.

The *harpoon* measures 1980 mm. (6 ft.  $3\frac{1}{3}$  in.) in length. The shaft, in redwood, is 1670 mm. (5 ft.  $5\frac{7}{8}$  in.) in length and 45 mm. ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  in.) in greatest breadth and more or less circular on section, excepting at the butt-end where it is flattened. On one side of the shaft a bone finger-rest projects somewhat backwards for a distance of 15 mm. ( $\frac{3}{5}$  in.) at a point 570 mm. (1 ft.  $10\frac{1}{2}$  in.) from the butt of the harpoon. 52 mm. ( $2\frac{1}{10}$  in.) behind the finger-rest a wooden peg projects 10 mm. ( $\frac{2}{5}$  in.) from the shaft in a direction at right angles to that of the finger-rest. An elongated flat leaf-shaped piece of bone is attached by its stalk to the butt-end of the shaft by two wooden pegs, each having a diameter of 6 mm. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in.). The portion of the bone free of the shaft thins slightly, and gradually expands somewhat outwards. It measures 290 mm. ( $11\frac{3}{8}$  in.) in length, 42 mm. ( $1\frac{7}{10}$  in.) in greatest breadth, and 10 mm. ( $\frac{2}{5}$  in.) in greatest thickness. On the opposite side of the butt-end there remains only a small fragment of what had probably been a similarly shaped piece of bone. Projecting from the butt is a bony nipple with a shallow depression on its top. It is 11 mm. ( $\frac{11}{25}$  in.) long, 10 mm. ( $\frac{10}{25}$  in.) broad, and 8 mm. ( $\frac{8}{25}$  in.) thick. The head of the shaft of the harpoon and the head of the harpoon present appearances corresponding with those described in connection with the spear, with the exception that the head is more rounded in outline, and tapers gradually from base to point. The nipple on the base of the head is worn off, and the front of the head, instead of supporting an iron tip, presents a surface flattened at right angles to the long axis of the head. The flat bone plate on the shaft measures 41 mm. ( $1\frac{3}{8}$  in.) by 37 mm. ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  in.), and is 7 mm. ( $\frac{7}{25}$  in.) thick. The head measures 217 mm. ( $8\frac{1}{2}$  in.) long, 24 mm. ( $2\frac{1}{5}$  in.) in diameter at its base, and 11 mm. ( $\frac{11}{25}$  in.) at its point.

With regard to the circumstances attending the capture of this kayak, it must be borne in mind that our first printed information is obtained from a man who visited Aberdeen some eighty years after the event. He states that it occurred "about the beginning of the

century," which may be held to denote any date between 1690 and 1710. In the course of the eighty years the facts may have become partly forgotten. In stating that the captive " could give no account of himself," Douglas leaves us in doubt as to whether his language was not intelligible to his captors, or whether he was then too weak to speak coherently. It is evident, at any rate, that Douglas regarded him as an Eskimo ; because a so-called " Indian man " who is supposed to have come from Labrador in a kayak could have been no other than an Eskimo.

Further, the scene of the capture of the kayak and its occupant is not clearly indicated by Douglas. " Taken at sea " is vague enough. However, the unwritten belief which has been handed down with the canoe in Aberdeen is that the capture took place in the North Sea, not far from Aberdeen.

The theory that the kayak-man had paddled across the Atlantic from Labrador to Scotland, a distance of 2000 miles, is clearly untenable. For one thing, the voyage would have had to be intentionally undertaken. An Eskimo out fishing or sealing does not carry enough fresh water to last him for the three or four weeks which is the minimum time required to make the Transatlantic voyage. Moreover, even if a strong westerly gale had driven him eastward for a day or two, he would have begun to paddle westward as soon as the storm abated. It is obvious that if the crossing was ever made it must have been by deliberate design. Enough fresh water to last a month must have been placed in the tiny hold, and also sufficient food for at least half the time ; allowing that he could catch a certain amount of fish on the voyage. Moreover, the sea must have been calm nearly all the time. The voyager could not sleep, drink, eat, or satisfy any other natural want unless the sea was calm. When Eskimos intend spending a night or two at sea, it is their custom to go in pairs, and at night they lash their kayaks together, thus giving them the stability of a raft. This admits of their sleeping with safety. Presumably, in

a calm sea, a solitary kayak-man can preserve his equilibrium when asleep. A calm sea is therefore necessary for sleep. It is necessary, also, for the performance of any of the other functions just indicated, which demand the untying of the lacing that unites the waterproof coat to the girth of the manhole. To untie this fastening when the deck was awash with water would be simple madness, resulting in immediate death by drowning. For these reasons the idea of a direct crossing from Labrador to Scotland cannot be permanently entertained.

Much more might be said in favour of a theory that the voyager had crossed to Greenland from Labrador, or had started from Greenland and had thereafter crossed to Iceland, thence to the Faroes, and thence to Shetland and Orkney. The successive crossings would be comparatively short. Here, also, it would be necessary to suppose that the voyage was deliberate. A theory simpler still would be that of an involuntary voyage eastward, as prisoner on board of a European ship, and a subsequent escape after reaching Europe. Something more will be said upon this subject later on.

There is, however, one circumstance that would seem to denote, at the first glance at any rate, that the Aberdeen kayak was constructed in Europe. This is that all the wood of its framework,<sup>1</sup> and of the implements belonging to it, is of the tree known as *Pinus silvestris*, a tree familiar to us in this country under the name of Scots Fir. Now, this tree, *Pinus silvestris*, does not grow in Greenland and North America, although it flourishes in Northern Europe. I am indebted for all my information on this subject to Mr William Dawson, B.Sc., Lecturer in Forestry in the University of Aberdeen. Mr Dawson has made a careful examination of the Aberdeen kayak, and has drawn the deduction that its wood was grown in Northern Europe, but not in an insular climate such as ours. "The wood of the spears in the Aberdeen kayak," writes Mr Dawson, "shows the character of timber

<sup>1</sup> Leaving out of the question some necessary repairs made at Aberdeen in 1900.

grown in a continental climate, and that, too, in a continental climate pretty far north or at very high elevation. The characters from which this can be deduced are: (1) the extreme regularity of each season's growth, and (2) the smallness of each season's growth. Wood grown in an insular climate shows less regularity, due to the prevalence of spring frosts after growth has begun, and the consequent checking of the development of the wood, and also shows greater growths in each year owing to the longer growing season. The wood of these spears is similar in character to some of the wood we get at the present time from Norway and Sweden, and from Finland, but is not similar to anything produced in this country, even in the remains of the native forests. The 'thrower' (a small piece of wood for launching the spears) is of wider-ringed wood, but it too is regularly grown, and might have been grown in more sheltered places in the same neighbourhood as produced the wood of the spears. The tree *Pinus silvestris* is native over a considerable part of North and Middle Europe, but the Baltic neighbourhood is its principal habitat." As already mentioned, the framework of the kayak is also of *Pinus silvestris*.

It appears evident, therefore, that the wood used in this kayak of two centuries ago was grown somewhere in the Baltic region. But it does not necessarily follow that the kayak was constructed in Europe. Driftwood and wrecks are cast at times upon the coasts of Greenland, and this kayak might have been made in Greenland of European wood. It is true that Dr Packard, in his book on *The Labrador Coast*,<sup>1</sup> states that the Greenland kayaks are framed of bone, whereas those of Labrador are framed of spruce wood. But this statement, although doubtless correct in the main, is too sweeping. It is, therefore, quite possible that this kayak was framed in Greenland from European driftwood. It would be something of a coincidence, but it is quite a possibility.

The date of the arrival of this kayak and its owner in Aberdeen

<sup>1</sup> New York and London, 1891, p. 207.

may be held to be somewhere between 1690 and 1710, according to the statement made by Douglas. Now, it is an important fact that similar captures were made in the Orkney Islands at the same period. In the words of Dr James Wallace, a native of Orkney and a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, another kayak was "caught in Orkney" and "was sent from thence to Edinburgh." He adds that it "is to be seen in the Physicians' Hall (Edinburgh), with the oar and dart he makes use of for killing fish." Dr Wallace published this statement in the year 1700, but before that date the kayak had been transferred from the Physicians' Hall to the University of Edinburgh. We know this from an entry in the Minute Book of the College of Physicians, dated 24th September 1696, wherein it is stated that the Physicians had decided to present the boat in question to the University of Edinburgh, in order that it might be more safely preserved. The entry further states that "the oars of the boat and the shirt of the barbarous man that was in the boat" were already in the possession of the University. From this statement we see that, as was the case at Aberdeen, the kayak-man was captured along with his kayak. It may be added that the plural "oars" of the entry evidently denotes the implements more correctly styled by Dr Wallace "the oar and dart."

This kayak had been in the Physicians' Hall in Edinburgh for at least eight years prior to its transfer to the University. This is certain for the reason that the statement as to its presence in the Physicians' Hall was first made by Dr Wallace's father, the Rev. James Wallace, Minister of Kirkwall in Orkney, who died in September 1688. Wallace senior, who had graduated at Aberdeen University in 1659, and who was a man of wide reading and of very considerable mental culture, wrote *A Description of the Isles of Orkney*, which was first published in 1693, five years after his death. The subject of the Orkney kayak-men is there introduced by him in these words (p. 33) :—

“Sometime about this Country (*i.e.* Orkney) are seen these Men which are called Finnmen ; In the year 1682 one was seen sometime sailing, sometime rowing up and down in his little boat at the south end of the Isle of Eda, most of the people of the Isle flocked to see him, and when they adventured to put out a Boat with men to see if they could apprehend him, he presently fled away most swiftly : And in the year 1684, another was seen from Westra, and for a while after they got few or no Fishes ; for they have this Remark here, that these Finnmen drive away the fishes from the place to which they come.”

After these definite statements the author adds his own comment (p. 34) :—

“These Finnmen seem to be some of these people that dwell about the *Fretum Davis*, a full account of whom may be seen in the natural and moral History of the Antilles, Chap. 18. One of their Boats sent from Orkney to Edinburgh is to be seen in the Physicians hall with the Oar and the Dart he makes use of for killing Fish.”<sup>1</sup>

This last sentence might easily be interpreted to mean that the boat sent from Orkney to Edinburgh had been obtained in Davis Straits. But this idea is negatived by the plain statement of Dr Wallace, the author's son and editor, who tells us that the canoe in question “was caught in Orkney.” Wallace junior, indeed, applies the term “Finnmen” to the Eskimos of Davis Straits, as well as to the kayak-men of Orkney. For he observes that “a full account of these Finnmen may be had,” in the work to which his father had previously referred, and which deals with the Davis Straits people only.

That work, which is in French, was written by a certain Louis de Poincy, and was published in Rotterdam in 1658. Although it relates primarily and mainly to the Antilles, the author was happily tempted

<sup>1</sup> *A Description of the Isles of Orkney*, by the Rev. James Wallace, Minister of Kirkwall ; first published at Edinburgh in 1693. The above is from the Edinburgh reprint of 1883, edited by John Small, M.A., F.S.A. Scot.

to interpolate a most interesting and valuable account of the Davis Straits Eskimos which he had obtained from a Captain Nicolas Tunes, the commander of a Flushing vessel, who had penetrated to the north end of Davis Straits in the summer of 1656. It is obvious that Wallace senior had read this book, and had seen its illustrations ; and when we look at these latter we understand what he meant when he

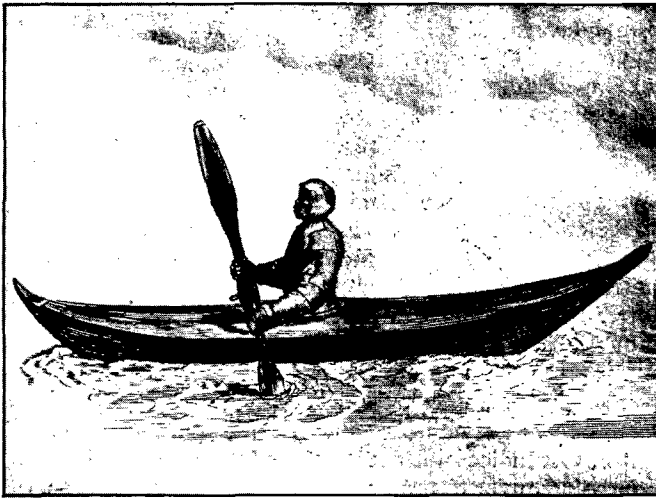


Fig. 3. Davis Straits Kayak, from De Poiney, 1658.

said that the Finnmen who were occasionally seen in Orkney waters in his day “seem to be some of these people.” What he clearly tells us is that the Orkney Finnmen were identical with Eskimos. Wallace junior is equally explicit. As already noticed, he accepts his father’s inference that the Eskimos of Davis Straits and the Finnmen of the Orkney Islands were one and the same people. He is somewhat puzzled over the circumstance that the former people should be found at such a great distance from their home, as will be seen in his opening remark in the passage about to be quoted. But his written description

of the Finnmen of Orkney and their canoes leaves no doubt as to their appearance. The following is his comment on his father's account:—"I must acknowledge it seems a little unaccountable how these Finnmen should come on this coast, but they must probably be driven by storms from home, and cannot tell, when they are anyway at sea, how to make their way home again; they have this advantage, that be the seas never so boisterous, their boats being made of fish skins are so contrived that he can never sink but is like a sea-gull swimming on the top of the water. His shirt he has is so fastned to the boat that no water can come into his boat to do him damage, except when he pleases to untye it, which he never does but to ease nature or when he comes ashore."<sup>1</sup>

In this description Wallace junior absolutely identifies the Orkney Finnmen with the Davis Straits Eskimos. What is more, he gives us a little bit of prosaic information in his closing sentence, which no other writer on kayak-people has ever referred to, so far as my somewhat extensive reading on this subject goes. It must be remembered that the younger Wallace was born and bred in Orkney, and he had opportunities of learning many details with regard to the ordinary habits of the Finnmen, whether from his own personal observation or from that of others.

One more writer on the Orkney Finnmen must here be cited. In the year 1701, the Rev. John Brand published *A brief description of Orkney, Yelland, Pighiland-Firth, and Caithness*, which contains similar references. Like the elder Wallace, Brand was a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, and he visited the districts named by him as one of a Commission appointed by the General Assembly of the State Church to inquire into the condition of religion and morals in those parts. In the course of his description of Orkney, he observes—and it is to be remembered that he was writing twelve years after

<sup>1</sup> Comment in edition of 1700. Cited here from Edinburgh reprint of 1693 edition (already specified), pp. 33-34.



the death of Wallace senior :—" There are frequently Finnmen seen here upon the coasts, as one about a year ago [1699] on Stronsay, and another within these few months on Westray,—a gentleman with many others in the Isle looking on him nigh to the shore, but when any endeavour to apprehend them they flee away most swiftly. . . . His boat is made of seal skins, or some kind of leather ; he also hath a coat of leather upon him, and he sitteth in the middle of his boat with a little oar in his hand fishing with his lines. . . . One of their boats is kept as a rarity in the Physicians' Hall at Edinburgh."

There are one or two points to be noted in Brand's account. It is pretty evident that he is speaking at second-hand. His visit to Orkney was very brief, and he could not have had much experience of Orkney life. Moreover, it is obvious that he had read Wallace's book, and had taken some of the statements from it. We know, for example, that the Finnman's canoe was no longer in the Edinburgh Physicians' Hall in 1700, although it was there when Wallace wrote. There is, further, an echo of Wallace's phraseology in at least one passage. Nevertheless, he had clearly made fresh inquiry on the subject, and had learned that a Finnman had been seen off the island of Stronsay in 1699, and again in 1700 off Westray. He also adds a touch or two to the picture of a Finnman whom he describes as sitting in the middle of his canoe " with a little oar in his hand fishing with his lines." These details he had not learned from Wallace.

In addition to the Finnman's canoe which was " caught in Orkney " and sent to Edinburgh, Dr James Wallace, writing in 1700, states that " there is another of their boats in the Church of Burra in Orkney." Burra, or Burray, is a small island in the southern part of the Orkney group. Its church has been a ruin for more than a century, and there is no vestige of the Finnman's canoe remaining, which is not to be wondered at considering the perishable nature of its materials. There is no reason, however, to doubt the accuracy of Dr Wallace's statement. He may have been wrong by a few years, as he was with regard to

the Physicians' Hall specimen. But a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, publishing a book in London, would not wantonly make an essentially false statement which could be refuted within a month or two after it had been made.

It will now be seen that, about the end of the seventeenth century, there were three kayaks preserved in Scotland. One of these, with its occupant, had been captured in Orkney waters, and was preserved in Edinburgh. Another was in Marischal College, Aberdeen, having been taken, also with its occupant, in the North Sea. The third was presumably captured in Orkney waters, seeing that it was preserved in an Orkney church. There is, moreover, special mention of Finnmen still at large in Orkney at that period; near the island of Eday in 1682, near Westray in 1684, near Stronsay in 1699, and again near Westray in 1700. It might quite well be argued that all these appearances were made by one man, and that it was he who was carried prisoner to Aberdeen about the beginning of the eighteenth century. On this hypothesis, our Orkney Finnmen could be narrowed down to three in number. On the other hand, the references of the two Wallaces manifestly indicate that the Finnmen seen in Orkney waters numbered more than three. When the traditions of the common people of Orkney and, it may be added, of Shetland come to be considered, it will be seen that the Finnmen were believed to be much more numerous.

It is somewhat remarkable that the year 1883 not only witnessed the republication of the records of the Wallaces and Brand, but two other writers also drew public attention, at the same time, to the theme which we are at present considering. One of these modern writers was John R. Tudor, whose book on *The Orkneys and Shetlands* appeared in 1883. Tudor, who wrote in a lively and interesting style, had read Wallace's and Brand's books, and he naturally makes reference to the Finnmen. "What can these Finn Men have been?" he asks (*op. cit.* p. 342). "Is it possible Eskimos can have been driven over

from Greenland ; or can there have been a substantial basis of actual fact for the traditional Shetland Finns that ' came ow'r fa Norroway ' ? The Burray and Stronsay instances," he continues, " all point to the *kayaks* or whatever they were being driven from the east, and the ones seen off Eday and Westray may, with equal probability, have come from that quarter. Besides, Cape Farewell, the nearest point of Greenland to the Orkneys, is 1180 nautical miles from the Noup Head of Westray, whilst the Norwegian coast at the southern end of Finmarken is 750, and at the nearest point only 240 miles."

Tudor is not the first, however, who looked eastward for the home of the Finnmen. Brand had already done so in 1700, ignoring or discrediting the Wallaces' assumption that the Finnmen had come from Davis Straits. In his estimation, the Finnmen were natives of Finland : " Which is very strange," he remarks, " that one man sitting in his little boat should come some hundred of leagues from their own coasts as they reckon Finland to be from Orkney. It may be thought wonderful how they live all that time, and are able to keep the sea so long." But although Brand regarded the Finnmen as a European race, his assumption that Finland was their home is open to many objections. Tudor's suggestion is much more deserving of consideration. But before that suggestion is considered, one feature of the early references ought to be pointed out.

It will be noted that the educated class, as represented by the Wallaces and Brand, clearly regarded the Finnmen as foreigners coming from a great distance. According to one theory, they came from the western side of the Atlantic, while another theory brought them from the upper Baltic. Douglas, again, who tells us of the Aberdeen kayak, believed that it had come from Labrador. The first to suggest the neighbouring country of Norway was Tudor.

Now, it is possible to say a great deal in favour of a Transatlantic origin. It will be well to shelve the " drifting " theory at once. A kayak with a man in it cannot drift a thousand, fifteen hundred, or

two thousand miles. Much more can be said for a theory of journeys deliberately made from Greenland with resting-places at Iceland and the Faroes. But simpler still is the theory of captives brought by European ships who had regained their liberty on this side of the Atlantic.

The custom of bringing specimens of strange people to one's own country, with or without their consent, is a very old one; and the kayak-people have frequently been brought to Europe from across the Atlantic. A number of instances in the nineteenth century could be adduced. The same thing can be said of previous centuries. In an article on "Eskimos, Ancient and Modern,"<sup>1</sup> Baron A. E. Nordenskiöld refers particularly to this practice. Referring to encounters between early European voyagers and Eskimos, he says: "Their meetings always ended in the murder or capture of the poor natives, who were carried away to be shown as curious animals in Europe. La Peyrère's *Report of Greenland*, written in 1647, describes them, and goes on to tell of the nine Eskimos who had been brought to Denmark by different Polar expeditions. . . . Poor Eskimos! They often looked northwards, and once tried to escape in their skiffs; but a storm cast them ashore, and some peasants caught them and took them back to Copenhagen. . . . Two of them again tried to escape in their kayaks; one was caught, the other who got away was drowned at sea. . . . The last of them died of grief after the failure of his third attempt to return to Greenland in his kayak. He was thirty or forty miles<sup>2</sup> out to sea before he was overtaken." This account of Baron Nordenskiöld's is not wholly accurate. Because he has overlooked a paragraph in which La Peyrère states that two of those who were captured by peasants in their first attempt to escape, actually did effect their escape on a subsequent occasion. "They were pursued as far as the entrance of the Sound, but could not be

<sup>1</sup> *English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *Leagues*, not *miles*, in the English translation of the original.

overtaken ; so that," observes La Peyrère, "it is probable they were lost, it being not likely they could reach Greenland in their small boats."

This occurrence took place somewhere in the first half of the seventeenth century. It may not have been a unique occurrence. I am not aware of any other recorded instance of the kind, but the *argumentum ex silentio* is one to which I do not attach great weight. There may have been other successful escapes of captive Eskimos, although they are not recorded. These fugitives may have made their way to the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and have been the people described as Finnmen. This seems quite a good line of argument.

To take this view, however, is to leave out of sight many other considerations ; ethnological, historical, and traditional. The last of these considerations may not appeal to all. The importance attached to tradition depends upon mental bias. In this particular case, we have seen that Tudor, in 1883, recognised a connection between the positive statements of seventeenth-century chroniclers, and the traditions of the common people that have come down to our own time. He puts the question : "Can there have been a substantial basis of actual fact for the traditional Shetland Finns that 'came ow'r fa Norroway' ?" The traditions referred to can only be noticed very briefly here.

They are current to-day among people of the old Norse stock in Orkney and Shetland, and they are to this effect. A race of "Finns" or "Finnfolk," men and women, used to visit these archipelagoes and the neighbouring county of Caithness several generations ago. The Finn women are chiefly remembered as witches and fortune-tellers who were always careful to exact payment for the exercise of their art. They were also skilful in curing disease in men and cattle ; and they frequently made a living by knitting and spinning. Sometimes they were merely strolling beggars. When a Finn woman settled in Orkney she professed to be a native of Shetland or of Caithness. When in

Shetland, she alleged that she came from Orkney or Caithness. The Finnmen were also very skilful in curing diseases, and the words quoted by Tudor are those of a song relating to a Finnman who came across from Norway to Shetland to cure the toothache. Both the men and the women possessed a specially-prepared skin which enabled them to swim like a seal in the sea. When they came ashore they discarded this skin. That is one version. Another version simply speaks of this skin as a boat, which they propelled at a marvellous speed. It is said that they could pull across to Bergen from Shetland in a few hours, making nine miles at every stroke. With the statements of the Wallaces and Brand in view, it seems quite obvious that these swift sea-skins, or boats, were simply the kayaks already described.

Thus, although the ministers and doctors of the seventeenth century were puzzled as to the place of origin of the Finnmen, the peasantry of Orkney and Shetland had a much more intimate knowledge of them and of their ways. It is true that they also regarded the Finns as foreigners, but all their memories of them denote a considerable amount of intercourse between the two races, with occasional intermarriages. And the Finns are chiefly associated with Norway in these traditions, although one writer reports them as having come from the Faroe Islands, while other stories point to their still retaining a foothold, in past centuries, in the Orkney and Shetland Islands. "It is a historic fact," observes Mr Nelson Annandale, who has noted certain traces of Mongoloid blood in Iceland and the Faroes, "that in the ninth century and earlier, the Scandinavians intermarried with the Lapps or 'Finns' as they were originally called. . . . Moreover," continues Mr Annandale, "Beddoe, than whom we could have no safer guide in physical anthropology, believes that physical traces of Mongolian ancestry can be detected in the Shetlanders."<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that the people of Shetland and, in a less

<sup>1</sup> *The Faroes and Iceland*, by Nelson Annandale (Oxford, 1905), pp. 163-164.

degree, of Orkney are mainly descended from Norse colonists of the ninth century, at which period Finn marriages were not very uncommon. Harold Haarfager himself married a Finn woman,<sup>1</sup> by whom he had four sons, and one of these (Halfdan) ruled over Orkney for a short period. Further, the Finns of Norwegian history bore exactly the same reputation for magical powers as the Finns of Orkney and Shetland tradition. Moreover, we do not require to look so far north as modern Finmark and Lapland to find those people in mediæval times. "It may be quoted as a strong piece of evidence," observes Dr Nansen, "that a people called Finns must have lived in old times in south Norway, that the oldest Christian laws of about 1150 for the most southern jurisdictions, the Borgathing and Eidsvathing, visit with the severest penalty of the law the crime of going to the Finns or to Finmark, to have one's fortune told (*cf.* A. M. Hansen, 1907, p. 79)." Dr Nansen points to "Finn" in many place-names of southern Scandinavia, and to a "Finmarken" situated to the east of Christiania. It is not to be supposed that the people of southern Scandinavia, in the twelfth century, made long and toilsome journeys to the extreme north of the peninsula in order to have their fortunes told.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the conclusion is almost inevitable, that these twelfth-century laws were enacted for the purpose of suppressing an everyday practice, and that the Finns, or Lapps, consulted were living in the south of Norway. Granting that they were there in considerable numbers in the twelfth century, their existence in that locality may have been prolonged for centuries.

But if these South Norwegian Lapps were the Finnfolk who visited Orkney and Shetland in the seventeenth century, it would be necessary to bring forward evidence from Scandinavia to show that the Lapps in Norway at that date made use of kayaks. Such evidence appears to be awaiting at present. That skin-boats of some kind were once used

<sup>1</sup> Snaefrid, daughter of Svase the Finn or Lapp.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr Nansen's *In Northern Mists* (London, 1911), vol. i. p. 206, etc.

by their forefathers is a traditional belief among the Mountain Lapps. Baron Von Düben tells us<sup>1</sup> that the Mountain Lapps assign to their remote ancestors a home lying far to the south-east, apparently on the Indo-Persian frontier. Thence, they allege, they were driven by their enemies, and wandered westward and northward in two divisions; the former of which eventually reached the sound separating Denmark from Sweden. This they ferried across in their small skin-boats; and, when the sea was calm, conveyed their goods over on reindeer-skin buoys linked together and drawn by swimming reindeer. Their herds also swam across. Thus did the forefathers of the Mountain Lapps enter Sweden.

Von Düben further points out<sup>2</sup> that the names of sailing vessels and large boats are all importations into the Lapp language, whereas, on the other hand, the only really Lapp name for a boat denotes a skin canoe, propelled by paddles, and devoid of rowers' seats and steering-place.

Tradition and language agree, therefore, in ascribing to the Lapps, before and after their entrance into Scandinavia, the use of skin-boats. There is nothing in the evidence to show that these skin-boats were *not* kayaks. But, admitting that they were, the period indicated is remote. What is needed is some proof of their use in the peninsula in comparatively recent centuries.

The possibility of proving this is complicated by the undoubted presence of Transatlantic kayaks in the museums and churches of Europe. La Peyrère, whose account of the Greenland captives has already been cited, states that their kayaks were still to be seen in Denmark, and that he had seen two of them in Copenhagen. That was in 1647. Then Olaus Magnus tells how, in 1505, he saw two of the leather skiffs of the Greenland pirates hanging in the Cathedral at Asloe. They were said to have been captured by King Haco, whose

<sup>1</sup> *Om Lappland och Lapparne* (Stockholm, 1873), pp. 372-373.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 387, note.



war-ships these kayak-men had tried to sink. For Olaus states that these "pirates," as he calls them, had the power of going underneath ships and boring holes in the bottom, so that they foundered.<sup>1</sup> "By this means," says Olaus, "the Greenland kayak-men, or pirates, obtained great booty from merchant ships."<sup>2</sup> In making use of this reference, Dr Nansen quotes two other Scandinavian writers, one of the year 1532 and another of 1551, who agree in charging the Greenland kayak-men with frequent and successful piracy.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest example (after those attributed to King Haco) of a kayak preserved as a trophy in a European church is also furnished by Dr Nansen. It is of the year 1430. The chronicler is a certain Dane named Claudius Claussön, or Clavus, who informs us that to the west of the Wild Lapps "are little Pygmies, a cubit high, whom I have seen," he affirms, "after they were taken at sea in a little hide-boat, which is now (about 1430) hanging in the cathedral at Nidaros (Trondhjem). There is likewise," he goes on to say, "a long vessel of hides, which was also once taken with such Pygmies in it."<sup>4</sup>

Dr Nansen also cites Michael Beheim, who travelled in Norway in 1450. "There he saw or heard of a people called 'Skraelings,' who are only three 'spans' high, but are, nevertheless, dangerous opponents both on sea and land. They live in caves which they dig out in the mountains, make ships of hides, eat raw meat and raw fish, and drink blood with it." Then there is the similar testimony by Archbishop Erik Walkendorf, who, in his description of Finmark, written about

<sup>1</sup> This idea seems to be derived from the kayak-man's accomplishment of upsetting himself and his canoe, many consecutive times; and of a confusion between the kayak-man and the narwhal, which was credited with the power of sinking a ship at sea by running its tusk into it and splitting it up. (See p. 468 of English translation of La Peyrère's *Greenland*.)

<sup>2</sup> *Historia de gentibus Septentrionalibus* lib. ii. c. 9. *De scorteis seu coriariis navibus piratarum Grunlandiæ*, Rome, M.D. LV.

<sup>3</sup> *In Northern Mists*, vol. ii. p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> *In Northern Mists*, vol. ii. p. 269.

1520, says<sup>1</sup>: "Finmark has on its north-north-west a people of short and small stature, namely a cubit and a half, who are commonly called 'Skraelinger'; they are an unwarlike people, for fifteen of them do not dare to approach one Christian or Russian, either for combat or parley. They live in underground houses, so that one neither can examine them nor capture them."

To these extracts must be added a statement by Cardinal Bembo, who lived from 1470 to 1547, and who refers to an incident of his own time. I quote Bembo's statement on the authority and in the words of an American writer of the year 1892<sup>2</sup>: "In 1508, a French ship picked up near the English coast a small boat, made of bark and osiers, containing seven men of medium height, darkish hue, and attired in fish skins, and painted straw caps. Their broad faces with their habit of eating raw flesh and drinking blood would imply that they were Eskimos; but it is difficult," observes this modern American writer, "to conceive of a boat drifting across the Atlantic with sufficient stores of food to avoid cannibalism. Cardinal Bembo adds, however, that six of them died—which may mean that they had been starving—and that the sole survivor was taken to Louis XII."

Now, although the boat in question was not a skin-boat, one can hardly dissociate it and its occupants from the people here spoken of. Their habit of eating raw meat and drinking blood at once links them with the Skraelings described by Beheim fifty-eight years earlier. And in both cases the question arises: Did these people belong to Greenland or to Europe?

If we accept the name "Greenland" in the wide sense given to it in the seventeenth century by Danes, the answer might be that they belonged to Greenland *and* to Europe. Because Greenland was then supposed to include the islands of Jan Mayen and of Spitsbergen,

<sup>1</sup> For these extracts from Beheim and Walkendorf, see *In Northern Mists*, vol. ii. pp. 85-86.

<sup>2</sup> *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1892, p. 140.

and to extend eastwards to Nova Zembla. Greenland was even believed to be united to Siberia, or "The Great Tartary."<sup>1</sup> In his account of the important whaling station of Spitsbergen, Martinière does not make use of the name "Spitsbergen," but simply calls it "Greenland." No doubt that was the name commonly given to that coast by the members of the Danish expedition to which he was attached. It is not very unlikely, keeping this terminology in view, that the kayak-using natives of the Vaigatz region, some of whom were brought to Copenhagen by this expedition, were loosely styled "Greenlanders." The date of this capture was 1653, and it is quite conceivable that a picture of certain "Greenlanders" which was painted at Bergen in 1654 represents these very people. I do not press this point, but the idea seems to me worthy of consideration.

This wider acceptance of the term "Greenland" would explain some of the references to "Greenland pirates" already noted. If the two kayaks seen by Olaus Magnus were really captured by King Haco, as alleged, after an attack made by the "Greenland pirates" upon his battleships, did that encounter take place in the neighbourhood of Cape Farewell? A similar question may be put with reference to the merchant vessels which, according to Olaus and two other Scandinavian writers of the sixteenth century, were frequently attacked and plundered by the Greenland pirates. Was the scene of their operations always on the other side of the Atlantic? It is noteworthy in this connection, that the Shetland traditions of the Finns speak of them as pursuing boats at sea, and demanding and obtaining money from the fishermen. Mention may also be made of the instructions given by Sebastian Cabot, in 1553, to Sir Hugh Willoughby's expedition to Northern Europe and Siberia. Cabot was then Governor of the Merchant Adventurers of England, and in that capacity he issued a series of "ordinances" to the expedition. These are all quite sensible and practical, and although the one about

<sup>1</sup> La Peyrère.

to be quoted—the 31st—is couched in terms that cannot be accepted literally, it is evident that Cabot was warning the expedition against a real danger. The paragraph is as follows:—"Item, there are people that can swim in the sea, havens, and rivers, naked, having bows and shafts, coveting to draw nigh to your ships, which if they shall find not well watched or warded, they will assault, desirous of the bodies of men, which they covet for meat: if you resist them they dive, and so will flee, and therefore diligent watch is to be kept both day and night in some islands."<sup>1</sup>

Discounting the accusation of cannibalism, and assuming that the other expressions are based upon the confused reports of previous voyagers, we have in this ordinance the suggestion that in certain islands between England and the Straits of Vaigatz there were people of proclivities similar to those attributed to the Greenland pirates by Olaus Magnus, a contemporary of Sebastian Cabot. Olaus tells us that those people dive under ships and bore holes in the bottoms so that they founder. We may believe that both he and Cabot were speaking of real people, without necessarily accepting all their statements as true. The most interesting feature in Cabot's statement is that he is undoubtedly referring to a people inhabiting certain parts of North-Western or Northern Europe.

Two writers of the fifteenth century and one of the sixteenth have already been quoted who speak of a people in the north-west of Norway, known as "Skraelings," who made use of skin-boats and lived in caves and underground houses. It will be remembered that this name "Skraeling" was applied by the Norsemen to the Eskimos whom they encountered in North America in the eleventh century. They sometimes referred to them also as "Lapps," and at other times as "trolls." There is no evidence that those Eskimos represented a type of man previously unknown to the Norsemen.

The general conclusion to be drawn from these various references

<sup>1</sup> *Pinkerton's Voyages and Travels*, (London, 1808), vol. i. p. 6.

seems to me to be substantially that drawn by Buffon in the eighteenth century : that the people of the Arctic Circle were at one time "nearly alike." A more modern ethnologist, Charles H. Chambers, expressed himself in similar terms in 1864. Unfortunately, he does not give any reasons for the conclusion he arrived at, which he briefly states in these words :—"I believe the race which inhabited the northern shores of Europe to have been akin to the Laps, Fins, and Esquimaux, and the Pickets or Pechts of Scotland, and to have given rise to many of the dwarf, troll, and fairy stories extant among the Sagas and elsewhere." <sup>1</sup> Sir George Dasent clearly favoured this view, although he expressed himself with much greater caution. In his opinion, the Orkney and Shetland groups prior to the arrival of the Norsemen in the ninth century were inhabited by two races—the dwellers in the underground houses and those who inhabited the circular towers commonly known as "brochs"; of both of which structures specimens are yet to be seen. "What these races were," observes Dasent, "whether the first which dwelt underground were Esquimaux of Turanian race, while the Burghs, or castles or Picts' houses, are the handiwork of that mysterious race of Picts, so long the terror of British antiquaries, may be matter of doubt." <sup>2</sup> It will be observed that these terms are so extremely cautious that Dasent commits himself to nothing. But he shows that he entertained ideas not very different from those to which Chambers gives direct expression.

It may be added, in conclusion, that Orkney tradition alleges that the Finnmen were the precursors of the Norsemen in Orkney, and that these islands were, in the local phraseology, "won from the Finn-folk."

[The blocks illustrating this paper have been kindly lent by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society from their Magazine of March and June 1912.]

<sup>1</sup> *Anthropological Review*, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> *The Orkneyingers' Saga*, Rolls Series, 1894, Introduction, p. v.