

History

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The origin of the seakayak can be found with the Inuit people in the northern arctic regions. For centuries they have been building wooden and whalebone frames covered with animal skin, a so-called skin-on-frame qajaq.

These traditional seakayaks are very seaworthy and the skills of the Inuit are unsurpassed. And they have to, as the Inuit were depending on the kayak to provide for their food and hides for clothing and the seaconditions in the northern regions can be rough and treacherous. Besides building seaworthy kayaks the Inuit are masters in rolling and the majority of them have mastered many of the thirty variances of the 'eskimoroll'. Kayaking tradition was almost lost due to the modern techniques of fishing and hunting and in the 80's of the past century there were hardly any Inuit left who had the knowledge and skills needed in kayaking.

Fortunately this was recognised in time and the knowledge of the traditional techniques was saved. More on this subject can be found on the website of Quaannat Kattuffiat or Qajaq USA.

The first "western" people that came into contact with the Greenland people and their qajaq will most likely have been the Dutch whalers when they were searching for new whaling grounds in the 17th century. Certain is that these whalers took the first qajaqs and paddles back to Europe. Some of them can still be found in Dutch musea, like the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Hindelooper museum.

Photo courtesy of -
Qayaq USA (Greg Stamer), Qajaq USA