



Qayaq: Kayaks of Alaska & Siberia

David W. Zimmerly

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This slim volume, originally intended as a catalog in support of the only museum exhibition ever devoted solely to these nimble little craft, offers an accessible review of much of what is known about traditional kayaks. Even though the form has existed with remarkable consistency for at least 2000 years, the skin boats of arctic hunters now constitute an endangered breed; they are resilient at sea but fragile in storage, so perhaps at most 300 original kayaks, decked-over skin vessels with cockpits for individual paddlers, have survived in collections worldwide.

It is author Zimmerly's intent, as he tells readers in the new foreword to this reprint to help us learn from them before they are all gone. Writing from the basis of years of research, he reviews the construction of different kayaks from various regions of Alaska and Siberia, discussing not only techniques and materials in general but the special approaches of individual craftsmen. He shows how vessels' design varied in response to the demands of climate and availability of resources as well as the needs of hunters using them; he considers associated equipment, from paddles to paddlers clothing. The result is a succinct but authoritative introduction to the kayaks of Alaska, the Mackenzie River delta, and Siberia.

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