



Eskimo Skin Scraper

E 306) A wood handled skin scraper or "ikun" with its original flaked and polished jade (nephrite) blade. Before the skins of walrus, seal, caribou, fox and bear can be made into clothing, they must be treated. Otherwise, they will stiffen, rot or split with use. The lengthy process of scraping, wetting and re-scraping with the ikun is repeated until the skins reach the desired quality. The women, sometimes aided by the men, first employ a blunt-edged scraper – usually a cup shaped piece of walrus ivory to remove the meat and fat particles from the skin's inner side. This very hard work may take three hours. Once the tissues are removed, the skin is moistened, left for a day or so, scraped across the length and breadth with the ikun, gently stretched, then re-scraped with the ikun or ulu (womans crescent form knife) that gives the skin a fine, soft texture. Northern Alaska possibly from Utkiawñ village area on Cape Smyth, Point Barrow. Mid to the late Thule culture : 1500 - 1900 AD. 14,5 x 8,5 x 5,5 cm.

Literature:

Ref. :

Murdoch John : ETHNOLOGICAL RESULTS OF THE POINT BARROW EXPEDITION, 1881-1883.
Ninth annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1887-88, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.,
1892.