

A fantastic voyage

I am on a visit to a sheep farm in South Greenland. Tired after a long day of hiking I sit down on a trunk of a tree, which conveniently is situated just outside the small hut we live in. First, I am not really aware of it, but at some point I realize what a fantastic story my complacent seat is a part of.

This trunk of a tree is completely stripped of its cortex and seems light here in the sunshine. It is probably ten metres long and has a diameter of nearly half a metre. There are no trees of this size in South Greenland. It must be a piece of driftwood landed here in the fiord, and salvaged of the locals.

Everywhere along the coast we find small and greater pieces of driftwood. Today we know that the vast majority of this driftwood comes from Siberia. A fantastic voyage from the Russian rivers into the Arctic Ocean. The sea ice and

the ocean currents have led the trunk down along the east coast of Greenland to its place here in one of the deep fiords of South Greenland at the west coast of Greenland.

The shortage of timber has for centuries made salvaging driftwood into a major employment for Inuits and Norse in Greenland. It was used for housing, but was also a necessity for the construction of the past kayaks and boats. This photo of the week shows the framework of an umiak, a women's boat, which in the original application has been covered with sealskin.

Imagine if this piece of driftwood, I sit on, could tell its story from the Russian forests into the river, out into the vast oceans, carried by the sea ice, and now located here at the sheep farm in South Greenland.



Framework of an umiak, Nanortalik, October 2006