

# NORTH

HALLS OF  
KUNSTKAMERA



exhibition guide

# AMERICA



Russian Academy of Sciences  
Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography  
(Kunstkamera)

Yu.E. Berezkin, S.A. Korsun

# NORTH AMERICA

## EXHIBITION GUIDE

Edited by Yu.K. Chistov, K.A. Nosovskaya  
Series «Halls of Kunstkamera»

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**Yu.E. Berezkin, S.A. Korsun**

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The exhibition guide on the hall “North America” is the second edition in the series “Halls of Kunstkamera”.

The guide tells about the traditional culture of the peoples of North America in the first half of the 19th century. The exposition is based on the geographical principle (from the north to the south) and is dedicated to the traditional culture of the peoples of separate geographical and cultural regions: sea hunters and fishers of the Arctic and Sub-Arctic zones, forest hunters of the American North, fishers of the Northwest Coast, hunters of the Plains, gatherers and hunters of the Great Lakes, farmers of the East and the Southwest, gatherers and hunters of California.

A separate chapter is dedicated to the history of the North American collections of the Museum.

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## HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

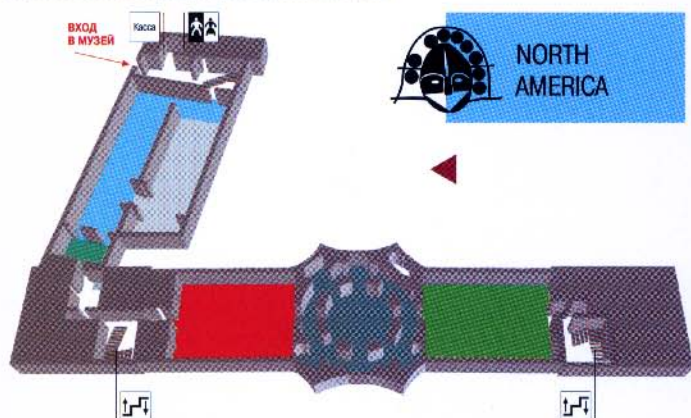
The authors made an effort to make this guide not only interesting and colorful, but also convenient for individual overview of the exposition «North America». The following information will help you to choose your own route around this permanent exposition, and easily find additional information on collections that have attracted your interest.

**YOU WILL FIND THE HALL «NORTH AMERICA»** with the help of this booklet, which you picked at the entrance to the Museum.



◀

In this booklet you will find the floor plan of the ground floor. The hall «North America» is marked with blue.



**THE EXPOSITION IS DIVIDED INTO THEMATIC BLOCKS** (sections), each of which consists of several showcases. Here you can find information on each section of the exposition. The titles of the chapters within each section of the booklet reflect the themes of the exposition showcases.

### MAIN SECTIONS OF THE EXPOSITION

- Sea hunters and fishers of the Arctic and Subarctic zones
- Forest hunters of the American North
- Fishers of the Northwest coast
- Hunters of the Great Plains
- Hunters and gatherers of the Great Lakes District
- Farmers of the North America East
- Farmers of the North America Southwest
- Gatherers and hunters of California



## HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

The table of contents indicates geographical regions of North America as well as the peoples inhabiting these territories, and the page on which one can find information on some aspects of life of the indigenous peoples of North America and photographs of the most interesting exhibits.



**THE PLAN OF THE HALL** can be found at the beginning of each chapter. The numbers on the plan refer to showcases of each thematic block.

**SHOWCASE NUMBERS** that refer to the current section are marked out.

In the beginning of each section of the guide, under the floor plans, numbers of showcases that contain exhibits dedicated to the corresponding theme are given.

For example, you wish to familiarize yourself with the theme «Sea hunting implements» in the sub-section «Aleuts» which is part of the section «Sea hunters and fishers of the Arctic and Subarctic zones». You need to find the show case number that corresponds to this theme on the floor plan in the beginning of the section «Sea hunters and fishers of the Arctic and Subarctic zones».

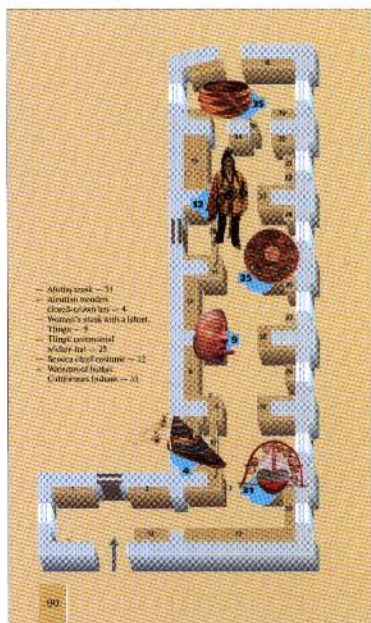
Approach showcase #3 and examine the exhibits.

Open the guide on page 30 (subsections «Aleuts» and read the section dedicated to Aleuts' sea hunting. Here you can also find photographs of the most interesting exhibits illustrating this topic.

## HALL OF NORTH AMERICA IN 5 MINUTES

If you are short of time to see the entire exposition, you have a chance to familiarize yourself in brief with several of its masterpieces ( please look at page 90).

At the beginning of this chapter of the guide you will find a plan that will help you to find your way around the hall and find six masterpieces of the exposition «North America».



## INTRODUCTION

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) is the first Russian museum founded in 1714 at Peter the Great's decree. Peter not only granted to the Museum his private collections, but also allotted to it his personal residence (the Summer Palace on the Fontanka River). In 1719 the Museum was transferred to the Kikin's chambers and opened for public, and as soon as in 1727 the first visitors could already examine the Museum's collections in a magnificent building erected on the bank of the Neva River especially for this purpose. The tsar himself participated in the projecting of the Museum's building.

The Museum, that served as a basis for the creation of the St.Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1724, was officially called the "Emperor's Library with Kunst and Natural Chambers", and its main collections were kept in the Chambers of Artificialis and Naturalis. In its original meaning the word "Kunstkamera" meant a collection of rarities, curiosities created by people mostly in remote and little known lands and countries. Later, the long official name was abridged to "Kunstkamera", the more so since a number of museum and private collections in Germany, Denmark and Holland were also referred to with this word. At present, the word "Kunstkamera" is often used in the Russian language as a synonym of the first museum collections of rarities and curiosities.

In 1741-1745 the first catalogue of the Museum was published. One can learn from it that then there already was an exposition dedicated to the peoples of America. The first documented collection on the peoples of Alaska was acquired by the Museum in 1762. Later, collections were received from the participants of the trade expeditions to the Aleutian Islands and Alaska, from the participants of the governmental North-west expedition headed by I.I. Billings and G.A. Sarychev in 1784-1794, from the participants of circumnavigations, from members of staff of the Russian-American Company, from orthodox missionaries and other researchers of Russian America.

Most of these collections have preserved until today and are of great value, since they contain objects that reflect the way of life and the culture of a number of now-vanished tribes in the time before the first contacts with the Europeans were made.



*Exposition of the Hall of North American Peoples, 1891.*



*Exposition of the Hall of North American Peoples, 1903.*

In the 1830s the Kunstkamera was divided into a number of specialized museums, including the Ethnographical and the Anatomical museums. They formed the base for the creation in 1879 of the Museums of Anthropology and Ethnography whose mission was to demonstrate the development of humanity and the culture of different peoples. In 1904, when the city's 200th anniversary was celebrated, the Museum was given Peter the Great's name. The Museum also preserved its historical name – the Kunstkamera.

During its centuries-long history, the Museum has acquired several hundred thousand objects on the traditional culture of the peoples of the world. Among them, the collections on the peoples of America occupy a special place – 5.5 thousand exhibits on the peoples of North America, over 8 thousand exhibits on the peoples of Central and South America and about 12 thousand archaeological objects on the ancient Eskimo culture that were acquired during the excavations on Chukotka. Today, almost a thousand objects are exhibited in the hall dedicated to North America.

A classical museum exposition on the peoples of America was created in 1903 under the guidance of an outstanding Russian ethnographer L.Ya. Sternberg. The curators of this exposition had participated in the famous North-Pacific (Jesup's) expedition that, headed by Franz Boas, then the assistant curator in the Anthropology Division of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, studied possible cultural and historical connections between the Pacific Indians and the peoples of Siberia on both sides of the Bering Strait. Almost at the same time expositions dedicated to the indigenous population of North America were created in the New York and the St. Petersburg museums that still have some common features. They are unquestioned and acknowledged masterpieces of the classical ethnographical museum exposition. The modern exposition "North America" in Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) was created in 1953 under the supervision of the member of the Museum's staff and the author of numerous articles on ethnography E.E. Blomquist. It was in many aspects based on the previous version of the exposition created by L.Ya. Sternberg. Since then it has been slightly altered and renewed.





*Mannequin of a Tlingit shaman, 1920s.*

The exposition is based on the geographical principle – from the north to the south. When entering the room, a visitor first gets familiar with the traditional culture of various groups of Eskimos that inhabited the coasts of the cold seas from Prince-William Bay in the Pacific to the



*Alutiiq masks on the exposition of the Hall of North American Peoples, 1920s.*

Atlantic coast of the Labrador Peninsula. Then come the Aleuts – the inhabitants of the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan Peninsula – , the Pacific Eskimos who inhabited the Kodiak Island and the adjoining mainland of Alaska. Then follow the showcases dedicated to the traditional culture of Alaskan Indians – the Northern Athabaskans and the Tlingit. Three showcases are dedicated



*The hall of North American Peoples, 1948.*

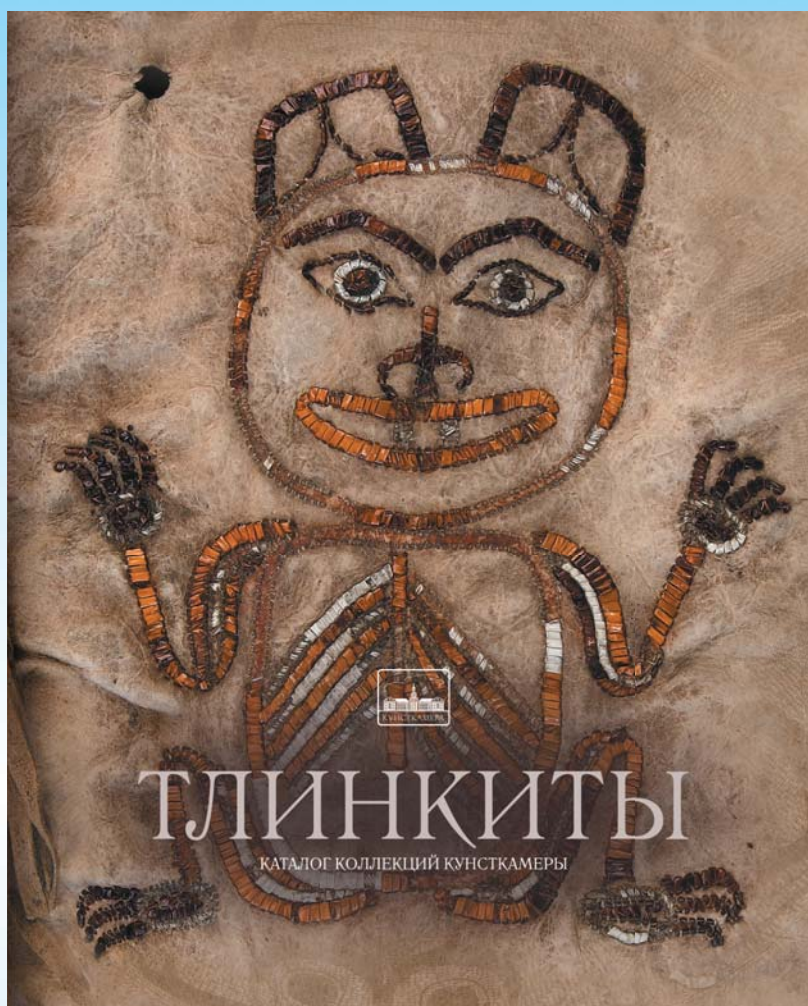
to the culture of the Plains Indians, followed by the exposition on the Iroquois people of the Great Lakes, the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest and the Indians of California.

In 2007 a sensor panel was installed in the room with the multimedia guide over the exposition that is designed to help visitors get additional information about the exhibited collections. The system of electronic labeling allows to choose any showcase from the room plan, to see the position of exhibits in the showcase and get information on any of the exhibits



*Visitors' multimedia system in the Hall of North American Peoples.*





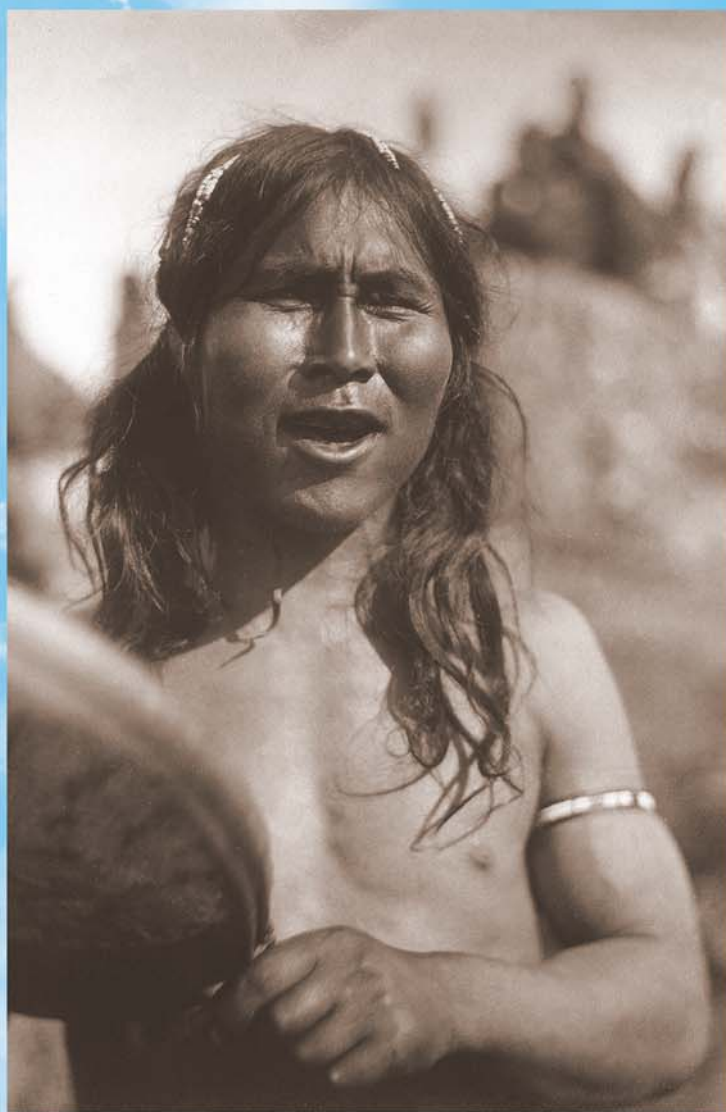
*Catalogue "Tlingits", 2007.*

in the room dedicated to North America. Also, a colorful and detailed catalogue has been published on one of the largest collections exhibited in this room. This collection is dedicated to the culture of the Tlingit people – the indigenous population of the Southeastern Alaska.

From 1973 the American collections of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography have been displayed in many international exhibitions in Toronto, Washington, San Francisco, Anchorage, Paris, Zurich, Barcelona, Dortmund, etc.

The present guidebook not only allows the visitors to familiarize themselves with the exposition dedicated to the peoples of North America, but also to learn many interesting facts on the traditional culture of the Eskimos, the Aleuts and the American Indians.

*Yu.K. Chistov, Professor,  
Director of the MAE (Kunstkamera) RAS*



## PREFACE

## COLONIZATION OF AMERICA

America was populated through Siberia. This hypothesis, based on the likeness between the American Indians and the peoples of Asia, was put forward as early as in the 18th century. Reliable dating of the first traces of man in the New World, however, only became possible in the middle of the 20th century with the development of archaeology and the discovery of the radiocarbon dating method. The Clovis culture (13,500 – 12,000 years ago) is considered to be the earliest on most of the North American territories. It was the culture of bison and mammoth hunters who rapidly moved around the non-populated lands.

Meanwhile, the most ancient monuments of Central Alaska are around 1000 years older than the Clovis culture. At that time Alaska was connected with Chukotka by a land “bridge” – Beringia. The ancestors of the Clovis culture creators must have migrated south from Alaska following the ice-free interglacial corridor along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. There is no evidence of the people coming to America before 14-15,000 years ago, but such possibility cannot be completely excluded.



▲ *Population of America from Siberia*



## ANCIENT BERINGIA

In the periods of global cooling huge masses of water turned into surface glaciers and the ocean level fell. The territories of the continental shelf that are flooded today formed Beringia – a strip of land that connected Alaska with Chukotka.

Separated by glaciers from inner Siberia and North America, Beringia served as a jumping-off place to the New World.



▲ *Ancient Beringia*

## INDIGENOUS POPULATION

Indigenous peoples of America (except for the Eskimos and the Aleuts) are referred to as Indians. According to their anthropological type, they belong to the Mongoloid race. Typical Mongoloid features are most pronounced among the Tlingit people and the Athabaskans, whose languages are united into the Na-Dene family. Therefore, Na-Dene ancestors may have come to America somewhat later than the other groups of Indians.

Russian travelers, merchants and missionaries, who came to Alaska, rarely penetrated deep into the continent and mainly made contacts with the inhabitants of the coastal territories – the Eskimos and the Aleuts. The Tlingit people and the Dena'ina Athabaskans cooperated with the Russians too, as their territories were also located by the sea. In California, in Fort Ross, the Russians mostly communicated with the Pomo and Miwok Indians.

## DISCOVERY OF ALASKA



▲ *V.J. Bering*



▲ *A.I. Chirikov*

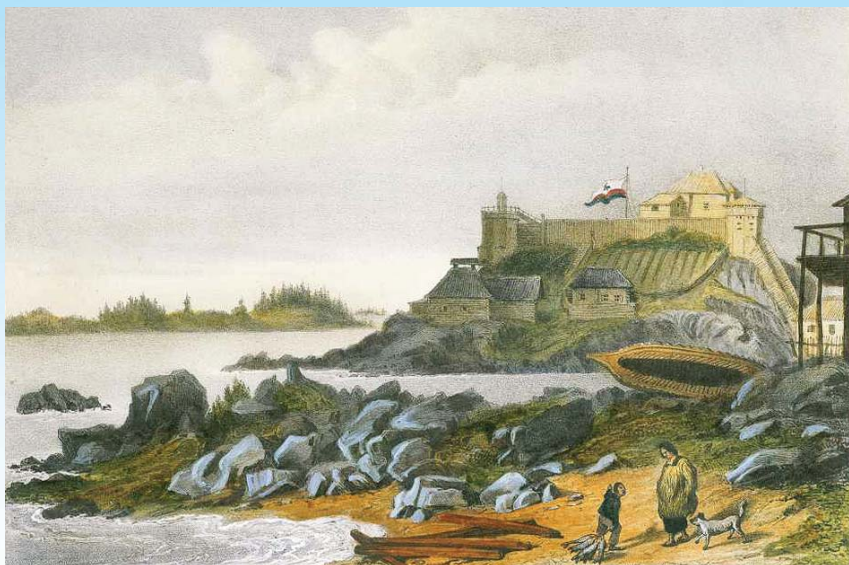
The Aleutian Islands and Alaska were discovered by the expedition headed by V.J. Bering and A.I. Chirikov in 1741. Among the participants was G.W. Steller, an adjutant of the Academy of Sciences, who was responsible for acquiring collections for the Academic Museum – the Kunstkamera. The participants of the expedition sailed on two ships – St.Peter commanded by V.J. Bering, and “St.Paul” commanded by A.I. Chirikov.

“St.Peter” dropped anchor by one of the Shumagin Islands (most probably, the Nagai Island). It was here that the Russians first made contact with the indigenous population – the Aleuts – who gave them two ritual rods and two wooden hats. “St. Paul’s” crew also met the Aleuts during their anchorage by the Adak Island, where the aborigines gave the Russian sea-farers several harpoons and a hat with a cap.

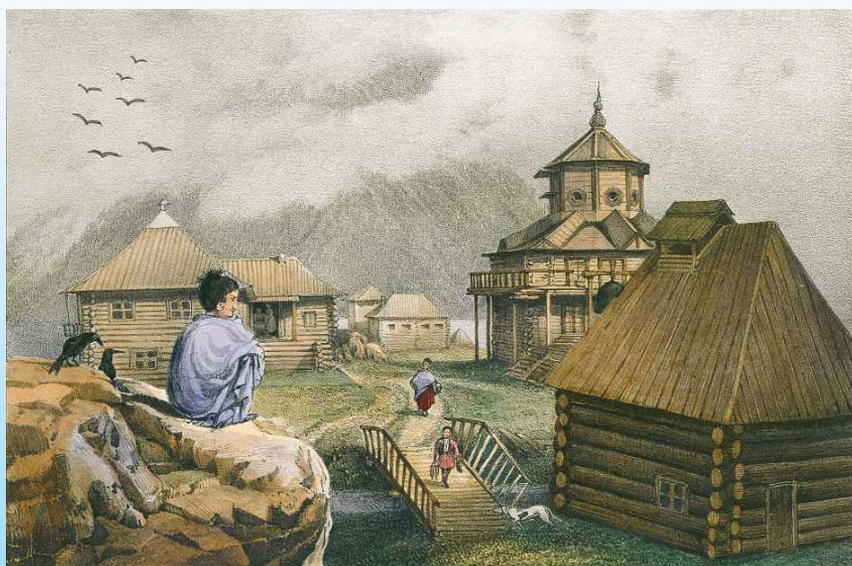
## COLONIZATION

Spanish conquistadors were the first Europeans to reach the territory of the modern USA in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Colonization of the east of the continent by the French and the English began a little later – in the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian travelers and merchants began to explore and develop North America.

In 1799 a monopolistic Russian-American Company was established to govern the Russian America: the Aleutian Islands, Alaska and a small region in northern California where in 1812 a settlement called Ross was founded. And in 1804 a town called Novoarkhangelsk (or New Archangel) was founded on Sitka Island that later became the administrative center of the Russian America.



▲ *Residence of the Governor of Russian America in Novoarkhangelsk. Drawing. 1827.*



▲ *View of the church in Novoarkhangelsk. Drawing. 1827.*



## GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL REGIONS

On the exposition dedicated to North America, the peoples are grouped according to the following geographical and cultural regions: the Eskimos and the Aleuts form the group of sea hunters and fishers of the Arctic and Subarctic zones; Alaskan and Canadian Athabaskans refer to forest hunters of the American north; the Tlingit, Haida and Kwakiutl people refer to fishers of the Northwest Coast of North America; the Dakota, the Cheyenne and the Comanche Indians – to hunters of the Plains; the Ojibwa and the Kikapoo – to gatherers of the Great Lakes; the Iroquois tribes refer to farmers of the North American East; the Pueblo Indians – to the agricultural peoples of the Southwest; the Miwok, the Pomo, the Maidu and the Chumash Indians – to hunters and gatherers of California.



▲ *Geographical and cultural regions of North America*



# SEA HUNTERS AND FISHERS OF THE AMERICAN ARCTIC AND SUBARCTIC



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## THE GREENLAND ESKIMOS

The Eskimos, along with the Aleuts, are descendants of the last wave of migrants who came to America from Siberia across the Bering Strait. The ancestors of the modern Eskimos developed the new lands in two directions – along the coast of the Arctic Ocean and along the Bering Sea coast.

The Eskimos were well adapted to the severe conditions of the North and their main occupation was sea hunting and fishing. This fact is proved by the main elements of the Eskimo culture: harpoons, throwing boards (spearthrowers) and the light frame-boat called kayak.

The peoples of the American Arctic regions mostly used throwing boards for sea hunting. The hunter only had one hand free for shooting – the other hand was holding an oar to help keep the kayak in a stable position. Bearing this in mind, it was impossible to use a bow (which requires using both hands). A throwing board made it possible to throw a harpoon with one hand. The hunter placed it on top of the board, so that its staff set against the ivory rest. A throwing board stretched the initial part of the harpoon's trajectory, thus making it possible to throw it to a longer distance. A harpoon thrown with one's hand could fly a distance of 15–20 m, while a harpoon thrown with the help of a board could hit a target 60–70 m away.



▲ *Throwing board*

The Eskimos of the Alaskan coast used toggling harpoons. Unlike darts, javelins, spears and other similar hunting weapons, the toggling harpoon had a tip that was not fastened to the shaft, but was set into a slot of its ivory head. The tip was attached to the shaft with a long cord (line). Often an inflated float made of an animal urinary bladder was also attached to the shaft.



▲ *Harpoon*

The base of the toggling harpoon's tip is cut off slantwise in the form of a sharp jag on its side.

The toggling harpoon is an ingenious invention that made it possible to hunt large sea animals that are difficult to wound mortally with just one blow. When hitting an animal's body, the ivory tip turned 90 degrees and separated from the shaft, but was still linked to it with a long line. The shaft, which was floating on the water surface, indicated the spot where the animal dived. When the animal reappeared on the surface to breathe in some air, the hunter made another blow. The toggling harpoon was most efficient when hunting on drift ice (it was rarely used on solid ice and on water).



▲ *Toggling harpoon tip*



▲ *Kayak model. Greenland Eskimos*

Kayak was an irreplaceable means of transportation necessary for sea hunting. Its frame was made of wooden laths that were connected with each other with the help of ivory bushings and leather straps. Then it was upholstered with skins of sea animals. When going out into the sea, a hunter put on waterproof clothes made of sea animals' intestines. If a kayak turned over, the hunter put it back with a deft strike of an oar and rowed further.

The Eskimos made fire by rubbing. A device for making fire consisted of a wooden board with openings, a wooden drill, a small bow, and a bushing. Tufts of moss were put into an opening, and then a drill was inserted into it. An ivory bushing was placed on the other end of the drill, and it was held by one's chin while rotating. The drill was wrapped with bow-string and then rotated. The moss inflated from rubbing.



▲ *Making fire by drilling*



## NORTON BAY ESKIMOS – THE UNALIGMIUT

The Eskimos of the southern coast of Norton Bay are referred to as the Unaligmiut. Their main objective was seals.



▲ Norton Bay Eskimos in front of a winter house. Drawing. 1843



◀ Ceremonial head-dress  
(MAE funds)

Seals were hunted with the help of bows and arrows, nets and harpoons. Other important food animals were beluga whales. Beluga whales' hunt was a collective event that usually took place in July and August. During high tide up to a hundred hunters went out into the sea in their kayaks, and the elders put on ceremonial head-dresses.

Out in the sea hunters made loud noise: they blew their oars against the water and their boats, rattled their tambourines and shouted. This was done to make herds of beluga whales approach the shore. The animals found themselves in shallow waters and during the low tide they were slaughtered. Beluga whales' meat and fat were considered the best kind of food available.

For the Norton Bay Eskimos, deer hunt was of high importance. Having discovered animal traces, the hunter sneaked up to the herd from the lee side as close as the length of an arrow's flight. If the deer moved, the hunter followed them, if they stopped, he also froze. The animals were unable to catch the smell of a man, and could take the hunter for a tree. Not being able to define the source of danger, they began to run around in circles and became targets for shots.

There were different types of arrows for each animal or bird. Arrows for hunting birds had blunt tips which broke their wings. To hunt deer the Eskimos used massive arrows with ivory heads into which stone tips were inserted. The shaft of an arrow was usually made of larch; bows were made of larch or fir-tree. To increase a bow's firmness, ivory plates were attached to its bends.



▲ Hunter



To hunt birds the Eskimos used a weapon called bolas. It is a handle to which tendon cords are attached with seal teeth at their ends. The hunter swung the bolas above his head and then released it and threw into a flock of birds. The cords entangled a bird, and it could not fly away and fell to the ground. A good throw could hit several birds at a time.



◀ *Bolas*

Parkas (overcoats) were made mostly of deer fur.

Men's parkas were knee-long, women's parkas — a little longer. The hem of a men's parka was straight, of a women's parka — rounded with side cuts

Winter parkas had hoods. The hem, the hood and the sleeves were trimmed with wolf fur. Men also wore fur pants, and women wore short pants with fur inside and long pants with fur outside. On the feet people wore “torbasa” — high boots. When the cold was severe, muttons were used.



▲ *A group of Eskimos in winter parkas. The town of Nome, photograph, 1904*



*Men's parka* ►



▲ *Women's parka*  
(MAE funds)

## "RIVER" ESKIMOS

The Eskimos inhabiting the lower reaches of the Yukon, the Kuskokwim and the Nushagak rivers are often referred to as the "river" Eskimos. Their main source of food was salmon (king salmon, hunchback salmon, red salmon, Siberian salmon, etc.), which they fished for from July to September. During the rest of the year they fished for white-fish, white salmon, lamprey, burbot and other kinds of fish. Fish was dried, smoked and frozen for the winter. Lamprey was also used to melt fat.

Clothes of the "river" Eskimos had a number of distinctive features. Their parkas were longer than those of the Unaligmiut people and often had no hood. Women's parkas differed from men's parkas only by small side cuts on the hem. Fur hats, unlike hoods, did not limit head movement. Lucky hunters wore hats trimmed with otter or wolverine fur, with wolf or wolverine tails attached to their backs.



▲ *Hunter's hat*



The “river” Eskimos made their waterproof parkas, footwear, hats and mittens from salmon or burbot skin. Such clothes were not very durable, but the abundance of materials and the ease of their processing compensated for it.



▲ *Men's parka made of fish skin*



The “river” Eskimos inhabited the forest-tundra zone and widely used wood for making house utensils: pots, snuff-boxes, cases for needles and other implements.

Fragile ivory needles were kept in cases often carved in the form of fishes or animals. Such case was usually a hollow tube, inside which there was a stripe of soft leather with needles stuck into it. The opening of the tube was closed with an ivory plug.



▲ *A case for needles in the form of a walrus*



▲ *Tobacco pouch man's and woman's faces*



▲ *Tobacco pouch in the form of a wolf's head*

## ALUTIIQ – THE PACIFIC ESKIMOS

The Pacific Eskimos form the southernmost branch of the Alaskan groups of Eskimos. To them refer the Chugach people of the Prince William Sound and the Kodiak Eskimos of the Kodiak Archipelago and the adjoining regions of the continent. The latter were referred to by the Russians as the Katmai people. Today the Pacific Eskimos are known as the Alutiiq and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were also referred to as the Aleuts.

For the Pacific Eskimos, sea hunting and fishing were of equal importance. Besides, they also occupied themselves with collecting, hunting birds and land animals. Seals and fur seals were hunted in the end of February. In May they hunted kalan (sea-otter) and whales. In the same time, the flow of fish began and lasted until the middle of September. During the summer season the Pacific Eskimos hunted sea-lions, dolphins, seals and birds. From September until the beginning of January the Alutiiq people lived on summer stock of fish and meat.

The Alutiiq people divided the world into the underground, underwater, earthly and celestial spheres and inhabited them with various spirits. The rituals related to these cults began in October, after the end of the hunting season, and lasted as long as there was enough food.



▲ Kodiak Island Eskimo man.  
Statuette, 19<sup>th</sup> century



▲ Ritual vessel in the form of a waterfowl



▲ *A mask depicting a legendary ancestor*

Funeral repasts and shaman rituals, aimed at providing successful hunt in the next season, were mass events. Members of secret men's unions organized ritual performances dedicated to the ancestors' cult.

Commemorations of the dead lasted for several years. When they were over, one of the newborn babies got the name of a deceased man. The people believed that the soul of the deceased man was the patron-spirit of the baby and guided him until he became a full member of the society.

Legendary and mythical ancestors, including outstanding hunters and warriors, were worshiped by members of men's societies. During the ceremony they put on masks depicting ancestors and performed ritual dances.

The Alutiiq believed that the souls of the deceased move into the performers of the ritual. Such communication with the dead was aimed at reaching success in all undertakings.



▲ *A mask depicting a hunter*



Rituals aimed at providing success during the next hunting season were performed by shamans.

It was believed that during the ritual dance the shaman's soul traveled to another world where it met patron spirits of birds, fishes and animals. The shaman asked them to give good luck to hunters, and the spirits promised rich prey in return for performing certain rituals.



▲ *A shaman*

## THE ALEUTS

The Aleuts inhabited the west of Alaska, the Aleutian and the Shumagin Islands.

For the Aleuts, the sea and its coast were the source of life. They made clothes from sea-otter, fur seal, seal and sea bird skins, used sea-lion and seal skins to upholster their kayaks. Bones of sea animals and walrus tusks were used to make tips of missile weapons. Wood brought ashore by the sea was used to make frames of dwellings, implements and utensils.



▲ *Aleuts. Drawing, 19th century*

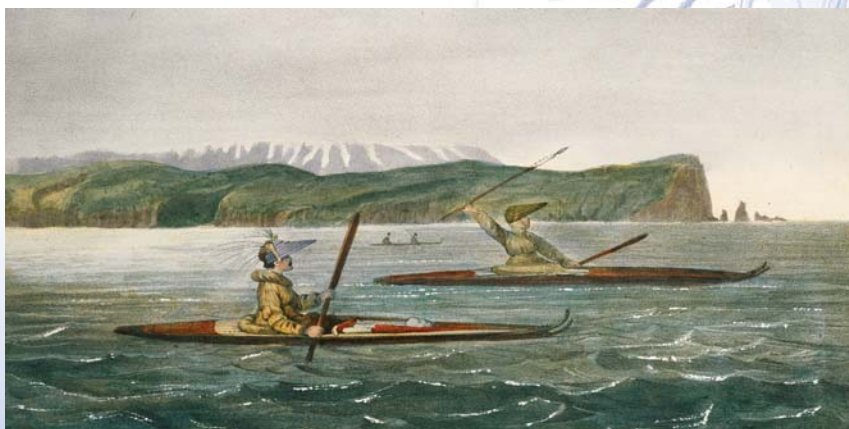


Fur seals and sea-lions were driven off the shore and slaughtered with blows of heavy clubs. Such type of hunt was the easiest and provided a stable source of food during the whole season (April – November).



▲ *A club for hunting sea-lions*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century sea-otter was the main objective for hunters. To hunt it, the Aleuts went out into the sea in small groups (up to 10 kayaks). They rowed in a chain and made sure the distance between the kayaks was enough to spot a sea-otter when it came to the surface. The hunter who noticed the animal raised an oar. The kayaks moved to form a large circle. When the sea-otter reappeared on the water surface, a light harpoon with a separating tip was thrown into it with the help of a throwing board. To kill a sea-otter, four to six blows had to be made. The hunter, whose harpoon hit the animal closest to its head, received its skin as a trophy.



▲ *Aleuts rowing in kayaks. Drawing, 1827*

The Aleut kayaks were light and fast.

The wooden frame was made of short laths that were attached to each other with the help of ivory bushings, tendons and straps. Kayaks of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century had up to fifty joints in their frame. Due to this, they bended and were not broken by sea waves, and could survive even in a storm.



▲ *Kayak*





▲ *A man in hunter's outfit. Photograph, 1909.*

The Aleut clothes were well adapted for the humid climate. They wore parkas — long straight shirts of a done-up cut. Parkas was made either of sea animals' or birds' skins. If the weather was wet, fur parkas were worn fur inside; bird skin parkas were worn feathers outside. Drops of water trickled down the feathers and the parka did not soak.

When going out into the sea, the Aleuts put on waterproof overcoats (kamleykas) made of sea animals' intestines over their parkas.

The hem, the sleeves and the hood were laced. Intestines were also used to make men's travel bags to keep implements and small prey.



▲ *Men's travel bag*

Sea hunters wore hats or obtrusive wooden cap peaks. This satisfied several needs: to provide good luck, to protect from the evil spirits, to protect the eyes from salty splashes and blinding sun rays.

To make a wooden hat, a plate was cut that was then steamed out and bended until it took the required shape. The joints were laced with tendons. Hats were painted and decorated with ivory plates and figures, beads and sea-lion whiskers. This animal only has four long whiskers: the luckier was the hunter, the more whiskers he wore on his hat. All the above mentioned details indicated the clan that the hunter belonged to and his social status. Conical hats symbolized birds' or sea-animals' heads.

It took several months to make a hat. They were very expensive and were only worn by the chiefs.

The price of such hat equaled the price of two or three slaves who were usually captives or orphans. Simple people wore cap peaks with open upper parts.



▲ *Cap-peak hat*

▼ *Cap peak*





The Aleuts spent most of the year in permanent settlements. They were built on high capes that usually divided two bays. A settlement consisted of several semi-underground dwellings each of which accommodated fifty to two hundred people. An average dwelling was 60 m long and 15 m high. To build such house a hole about 1.5 m deep was dug in the ground. Two rows of poles were installed on its sides and two more rows were placed at a distance of 2-4 m from the walls. Then the construction was covered with a frame made of laths and then with mats and grass. Above the grass, a thick layer of soil was put and then covered with turf. The house was entered through a hole in its top, which also provided for ventilation and as a source of light. To go in and out, a vertical log with notches was used.

Inside the dwelling, between the side rows of poles, partitions were installed and covered with mats that divided the space into separate sleeping areas for each family. The central part of the dwelling remained a public space where men made implements and kayak frames and women processed skins and made clothes. It was also here that religious ceremonies and celebrations were held.

*Inside an Aleut dwelling* ►







# FOREST HUNTERS OF THE AMERICAN NORTH

Northern Athabaskans  
Hunting weapons, clothes — 30



## NORTHERN ATHABASKANS

Taiga regions of western Canada and the inland part of Alaska were inhabited by the Northern Athabaskans.

The Athabaskan people came here 2 – 2.5 thousand years ago from the regions of Canada adjoining south Alaska. Separate groups of the Athabaskans moved south and changed their way of life. The most well-known of them are the Southern Athabaskans (Apache and Navajo) who live in the Southwest of the USA.



▲ *Athabaskans. Drawing, 19th century*



▲ *Suede quiver with scenes of hunt*




Northern Athabaskans' main occupation was hunting large forest animals: moose, caribou, bears and rams.

Caribou were hunted mostly in spring and autumn during the animals' seasonal migration. The Athabaskans' typical hunting and battle weapon were tomahawks made of caribou horns. They were used in hand-to hand fights and to finish off wounded animals.

Clothes were made of suede. A typical outfit consisted of a long shirt with narrow sleeves and pants that made one whole with footwear.

Clothes were decorated with fringe, braids and applique works made of porcupine quills. Such ornaments were made on leather stripes that were then sown to the clothes. Making patterns from split porcupine quills took a lot of time and required a lot of effort and patience. A most skillful woman only made 20-30 applique works during her whole life. When a shirt became worn out, stripes with patterns were cut off and sown to a new shirt. Patterns had symbolical meaning and served as protecting magical charms.

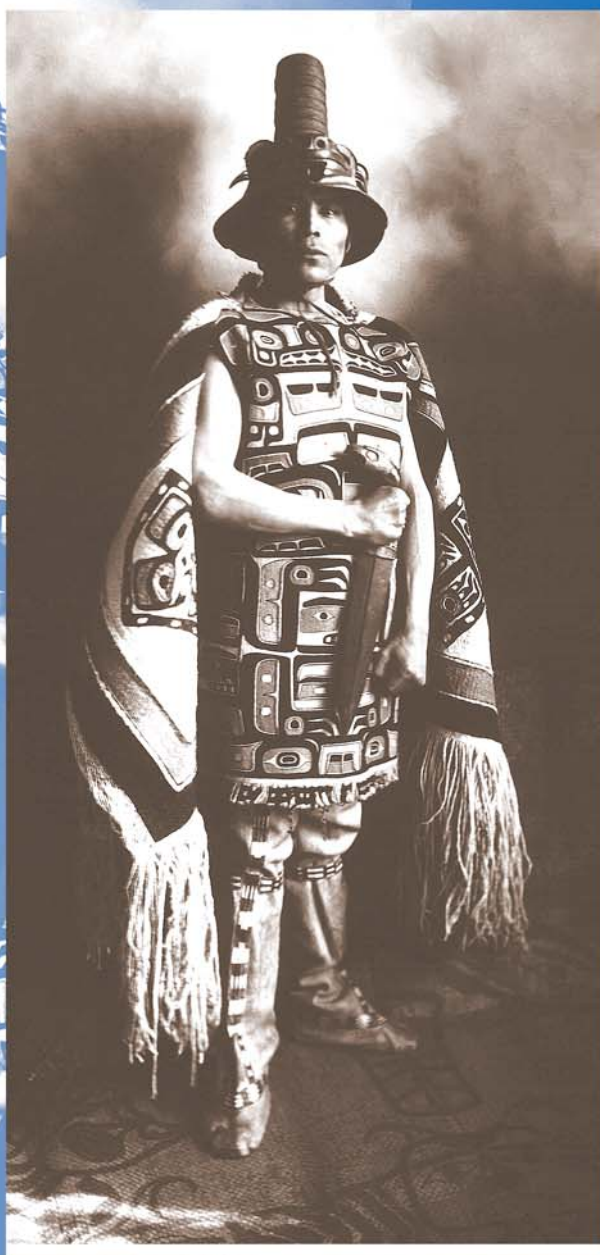


▲ *Tomahawks made of caribou horns*



◀ *An Indian woman in a suede shirt*





# INDIANS OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

### Tlingit

- Weapons — 8
- Ceremonial objects — 9
- Shaman attributes — 10
- Wicker hats — 25
- Clan emblems — 27
- Ritual clothes and vessels,
- Fishing tools — 28
- Smoking pipes — 29





## THE TLINGIT

The Tlingit people inhabited the coast of the south-eastern Alaska and the Alexander Archipelago.



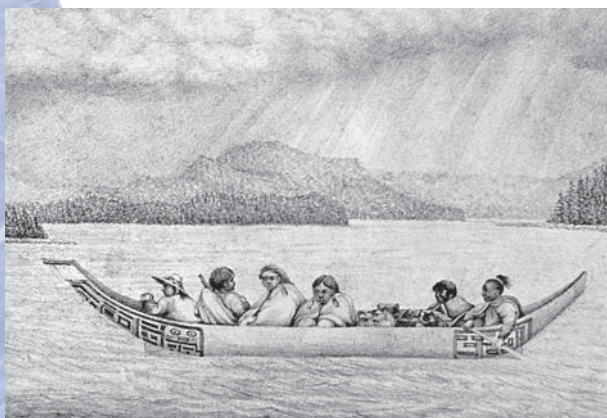
▲ *The Tlingit. Drawing, 19th century*



▲ *A hook for catching halibut*

Their main occupation was fishing. In the summer, during the spawning period, they caught king salmon and hunchback salmon. They smoked and dried fish and made stocks enough for the whole year. Red fish was caught with the help of traps, damming and large nets.

Halibut was caught with the help of large wooden hooks in the form of a slingshot. A man went out into the sea and installed a massive wooden float (that was usually cut in the form of a water bird) not far from the shore. A long line was tied to the float, and on the other end it was attached to a stone sinker. Wooden hooks with metal or ivory tips and bait were attached to the line. The Tlingit people always carved a figure of a mythical hero, an animal or a man on their hooks.



▲ *Tlingit people in a boat. Drawing, 1844*

The American Indians believed that a curious halibut would definitely approach the hook to examine the figure carved on it.

The Tlingit people used hollowed-out boats made of whole cedar trunks.

To make a boat, the core of the trunk was burnt out, and then it was hollowed out and filled with water that was then boiled with the help of red-hot stones. Then wooden cross-bars were inserted into the steamed trunk and the outer surface was grinded to give it the form of a boat. The sides and the stern were built-up with wooden planks. The outer surface of the boat was covered with drawings of animal figures — its owner's mythical patrons.



▲ *Boat model*



Casual hats that protected from the rain were woven in the form of truncated cones. Richly decorated and painted, they were also used by American Indians during various ceremonies. Heads of rich families wore wide hats, whose brims and crown were woven as one whole and provided a single ground for the drawing that covered the hat.

The elders wore special hats with cylindrical extensions. Such hats were worn during the Potlatches – traditional celebrations that were accompanied with feasts and reciprocity of wealth. Rich Tlingit people (chiefs and shamans) wore Chilkat blankets that were covered with complex conventionalized patterns.

These blankets got their name from the settlement called Chilkat that was famous for skillful women who made them. The blankets were covered with a complex “eye” pattern – geometrical figures with rounded edges. Women made threads by twisting goat down on their laps with their palms. The Tlingit did not have the loom; instead they used a construction that consisted of two poles with a horizontal cross-bar to which threads were attached. Blankets were braided rather than woven. Balls of threads lay on the ground in baskets or bags.



▲ *Ceremonial hat*



▲ *Chilkat blanket*



Men drew patterns of wooden planks, and women transferred them onto the blankets. The patterns were divided into three parts – the central and the side fragments. The central part of the blanket covered its owner's back. It was here that the main image (the clan emblem) was placed. It took not less than half a year to make one Chilkat blanket. They were of great value, and in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century not every head of a family could afford to have at least one blanket.

The Tlingit people made smoking pipes from argillite (stone-like schistose clay) mostly as souvenirs to sell them to Europeans. Some pipes did not even have a flue and could not be used for smoking.



▲ *Smoking pipe*



▲ *Smoking pipe*

Argillite can be easily cut with metal tools and becomes shiny when it dries. Argillite processing became popular among the Tlingit people and their southern neighbors (the Haida) in the 1830s. Argillite objects were soon produced for souvenirs.

The Tlingit people carried wars to obtain loot, mostly slaves. A warrior's outfit consisted of a shirt made of thick moose skin, a wooden armor to protect the back and the chest, a helmet and a visor that protected his head and neck.



▲ *Warrior's shirt*



Helmets were carved in the form of its owner's clan patron. They were decorated with sea-lion whiskers and teeth. The helmet protected the upper part of the warrior's head. Its lower part and the neck were covered by the visor. To make it stable and, at the same time, prevent it from limiting the warrior's head movements, he held it with his teeth from the inside by a special crosspiece.

The Tlingit armors consisted of two parts different in size. The bigger part protected the back, and the smaller — the chest. Armors were made of thin wooden



▲ *Helmet in the form of a sea-lion's head*



▲ *Helmet in the form of a mountain goat's head*



▲ *Visor*

laths braided round with tendons. On both sides of an armor a free space was left where the drawing of its owner's clan emblem was placed.

▼ *Tlingit warrior's armor*





Even before they made the direct contacts with the Europeans, the Tlingit people made tools of metal. They adopted copper processing methods from the Athabaskans who heated it and then forged with the help of stone hammers. The Tlingit people began to use the same method for treating iron that they found on the sea coast in shipwreck fragments or exchanged it with southern tribes. Such iron was used to make daggers. In the Tlingit language the dagger means “always ready for fight”. Even when sleeping, the Tlingit men kept their daggers close at hand.



▲ *Metal two-blade dagger*

The handle of a dagger was wrapped with a suede strap with a cut at its end. The loose end of the strap was turned twice around one's wrist, and the middle finger was put into the cut. Thus, the dagger was strongly attached to a man's hand, and it was difficult to snatch it out even from a killed warrior.

The Tlingit people were divided into two phratries (the Wolf and the Raven moiety) called by the names of their mythical ancestors (a moiety is a group of clans within one tribe). Primeval ancestors could take the form of people or animals. In their honor ritual dances were performed, during which animal movements were imitated. Representatives of the Raven moiety performed their rituals wearing wide Chilkat blankets (that symbolized the bird's wings during the dance) and special headdresses with a raven head carved on them. Representatives of the Wolf moiety wore blankets that were decorated with long strands of dark threads that symbolized a wolf's tail. Only representatives of different moieties could enter into a marriage.



▲ *Tlingit performing Raven's dance*

Potlatch (this word comes from the Chinook language and means “to give”) is a ritual elimination and giving away of property typical of the American Indians inhabiting the Northwest Coast of North America. Potlatch could be of secular character, or could be timed to the winter rituals of the spirits “visiting” the people. The elders gathered for a Potlatch from dozens of miles away. According to the description of potlatch by the Kwakiutl people of the Vancouver Island that dates to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, slaves threw into the fire unique objects made of native copper before the guests’ eyes, chopped boats, poured butter made of candlefish fat into the fire, etc. It was believed that if the guests, who were present at a potlatch and received presents, accepted the treatment, they acknowledged the social status that the host claimed to have.



▲ *Ritual vessel for Potlatch*



▲ *Potlatch vessel*

The Tlingit people believed that the world is inhabited with spirits. Shamans served as mediators between the people and the world of spirits.

It was believed that a shaman’s soul could travel to the world of spirits and influence them so that they do no harm to the people. During the ritual, the shaman put on a mask which depicted his patron spirit to make it moves into him. Each shaman had at least four masks: one mask for a patron spirit from the upper world, one – for a spirit from the middle world and one for a spirit from the lower world, and a mask of his personal patron spirit.

A shamans’ outfit was designed to fight the evil spirits. In the Tlingit language ‘breastplate’ meant ‘the upper shield’, ‘apron’ – ‘the front shield’, ‘leggings’ – ‘the leg shield’. Clothes were decorated with beaks of the tufted puffin bird, numerous amulets and mojos.

Shamans wore hats made of goat horns (the “eight-horn hat”) that symbolized the eight parts of the world (the earthly world as well as the world of spirits) where the shaman’s patron spirits could travel.

A shaman’s outfit always included an ivory necklace with an amulet (the shaman’s personal protector), a wooden rattle in the form of a bird, a tambourine and clappers. Shamans fought the evil spirits with wooden knives and shot them with wooden arrows. The tips of such arrows were carved figures of spirits – the shaman’s protectors.

After a shaman died, his wooden dagger was buried together with him. It was believed, that in the world of the dead the soul will need it if it gets attacked by the evil spirits that the shaman fought while he was alive.



▲ Shaman's "eight-horn hat"

▼ Tlingit shaman



► Shaman's wooden dagger







▲ Shaman's mask depicting the spirit of the Sun



▲ Shaman's mask depicting the spirit of mosquito

The Tlingit masks are diverse, and several types of them can be distinguished: military, dancing, portrait and shaman masks. Military masks were used when peace was made between two fighting parties; dancing masks were used when performing ritual dances during potlatches. The shaman masks depicted spirits.



▲ *Woman's mask with a labret in the lower lip*



▲ *Labret*

A portrait mask, after the person that it depicted died, became a dancing mask.

Women's masks had labrets cut in the lower lip – a decoration of rich Tlingit women. Girls had their lower lip pierced and a small labret was inserted into the hole. As the girl grew, larger bushings were inserted. The labret symbolized wealth and the noble origin. Women slaves were not allowed to wear them.

It was believed, that during his ritual the shaman put himself in great danger: not only his patron spirits, but also the evil spirits flew to the sound of his tambourine. To protect himself, the shaman attached numerous amulets to his clothes. Pendants made of animals' teeth and claws, small bones and carved figures provided additional protection.

A necklace made of ivory pendants, one of which was fixed horizontally, was an integral part of a shaman's outfit.

The necklace included a tubular bone from a caribou's leg. This special amulet was called the "soul trap". It was believed that a man became ill because one of his

souls left his body. The shaman had to find it, catch it into the hollow “trap”, and then return it to the ill man.

The Tlingit shamans used rattles of several types, including the “Raven rattles”, rattles in the form of waders or water birds, an oval or a circle with a handle, tambourine-rattles, rattles with beaks of tufted puffin birds.

The Raven (or ‘El’ in the Tlingit language) was an important mythological character. The Raven was the demiurge — the creator of the people, the earth and the sky. At the same time, the Raven was considered a trickster, a fraud, a thief. He could take any guise, but most often it appeared in the form of a man or a bird (the raven).

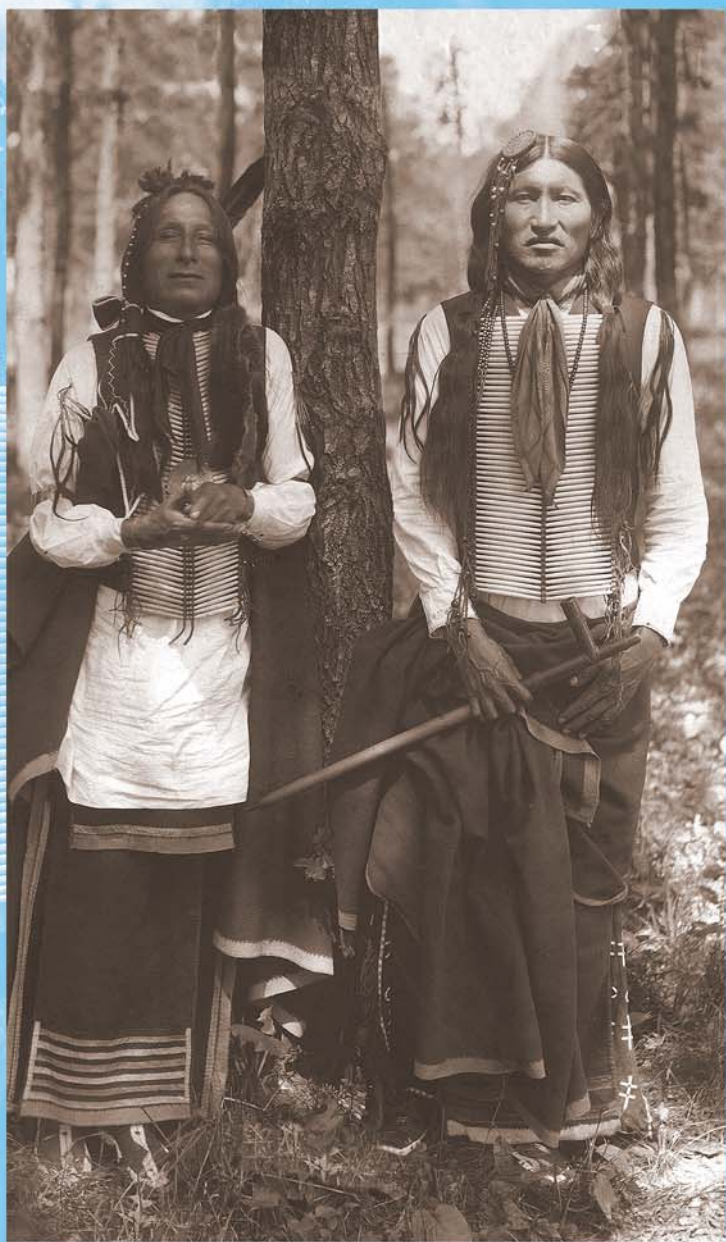


▲ *Shaman's necklace*



▲ *Raven's rattle*





# HUNTERS OF THE PLAINS

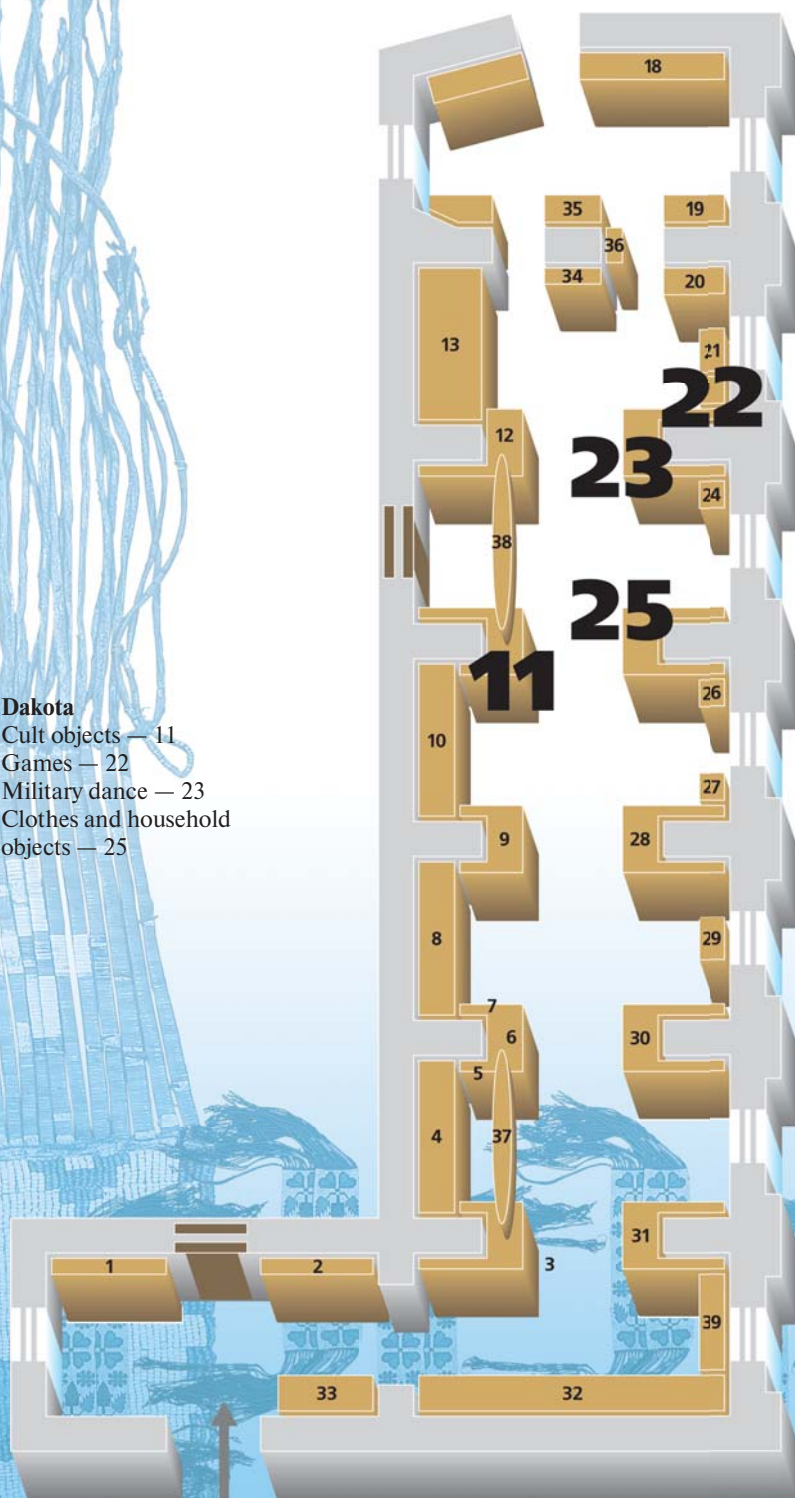
# Dakota

Cult objects — 11

Games — 22

Military dance — 23

Clothes and household  
objects — 25





## DAKOTA

The Indians of the Plains are several dozen groups of tribes who speak different languages and most of which settled in the steppes, forest-steppes and semi-deserts of North America not earlier than in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD, and some of them after the discovery of America by Columbus.

The main occupation of the Indians inhabiting the Plains was hunting bisons (on foot, and later on horseback).

It is the image of the Indians of the Plains that most people associate with their concept of an American Indian – on horseback, wearing a large headdress made of feathers, with a tomahawk in his hand.



▲ *Blackfoot chief.*  
*Drawing, beginning of the 20th century*



▲ *Dakota chief.*  
*Photograph, beginning of the 20th century*

Most utensils of the Indians of the Plains were adopted for the nomadic way of life. These are various bags to keep food, quivers, shields, tobacco pouches, containers for water. They were made of suede – curried bison or moose skins.



▲ *A bag for transporting dried meat*



Soft suede was used to make clothes: long women's shirts, usually sleeveless, leggings that covered men's legs, breech clouts. Clothes were decorated with fringe and embroidery made of split porcupine quills, straw, and later beads that were acquired from the Europeans.

◀ *Everyday women's clothes of the Plains Indians*





▲ *Men's vest*



▲ *Wrist bands*



▲ *Moccasins*

American Indians wore suede footwear – moccasins that were always decorated with a pattern made of beads that indicated the tribe their owner belonged to.



Tomahawks and smoking pipes are the most outstanding elements of the culture of the Plains Indians. A tomahawk (fighting axe) was an integral element of a man's outfit. It was used as a throwing weapon during a fight, when hunting and in religious rituals.

In the handles of ritual tomahawks holes were made and, thus, they served as smoking pipes in the same time. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century in England and Holland small axes with metal blades began to be made especially to sell them to Indians.

For the Plains Indians smoking is a ritual act the purpose of which is communicating with the spirits. It was believed that, together with the smoke, requests for well-being go to the upper world to the people's ancestors. Smoking a pipe was part of the ritual of making peace between inimical groups of American Indians.

The refusal to smoke the peace pipe and, therefore, to make peace, was viewed as showing disrespect for the spirits.



▲ *Tomahawks*



▲ *Smoking pipe*

▼ *Smoking pipe case*





Religious rituals were held under the guidance of shamans. During such rituals the American Indians asked spirits for help and thanked them.

The most important mass ritual was the “Sun Dance” that was held during the summer solstice. This name was given to the ritual in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Europeans, though it was not connected directly to the worship of the Sun. The main purpose of this ritual was maintenance of fertility, of well-being and of everything living. The Plains Indians did not have special houses where rituals could be performed. Shaman rituals were held in tipis — a traditional portable dwelling (a conical hut made of poles and covered with bison or caribou skins. In the center of a tipi an altar was installed on which people put a bison skull, a large fan made of birds’ wings, a smoking pipe and a tuft of “sweet grass” (tobacco). The fan was used to maintain smoldering fire when smoking the pipe.



▲ *Amulet made of bison hoof*



▲ *Shaman's altar*

Before they began to use horses (that were brought by the Europeans), the Plains Indians used dogs when hunting and for transportation of goods. The dog was worshiped as a sacred animal, the protector of men's military unions. When setting off for a campaign, members of such unions performed the "dog" dance.

The people believed that when performing such dance, the warrior acquires dog's qualities: strength, stamina, adroitness. The performer of the "dog" dance held a symbolic spear with bunches of dyed hair and feathers in his hand. The "magic power" that these bunches possessed, helped transfer requests for help in the forthcoming fight to the spirits.



► *Dog dance*





# COLLECTORS AND HUNTERS OF THE GREAT LAKES





# **Algonquians**

A pirogue with oars — 38

Clothes and household objects — 11

## ALGONQUIAN PEOPLE

The forest areas north of the Great Lakes from the coast of the Atlantic to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains were inhabited by the Algonquian People.

The Algonquian language family (one of the largest in America) unites the Ojibwa, Menomini, Fox, Kikapoo, Micmac and other tribes.

► *Ojibwa chief. Photograph, 19th century*



◀ *Racket skis*

The Algonquian people were mostly occupied with collecting and hunting large forest animals: deer, moose, bears. In the winter, to be able move on the surface of the deep snow, they used racket-skis. The Indigenous people of America did not know sliding skis.





▲ *Collecting wild rice. Drawing, 20th century*

Of high importance was collecting wild rice. It was gathered from a boat which usually accommodated two women. Rice stems were bended over the side of the boat and grains shaken down with stick blows.

Then rice was dried on special daises under which fire was made. Dried rice was then threshed by men. Rice was used to make soups with meat, fish, berries and maple sugar. The possibility to gather rice every year in the same place let the Algonquian people lead settled way of life. Such type of collecting was no less efficient than the early farming.



To make kitchen utensils the Algonquians used wood and bark.

◀ *Birch-bark bag*



The clothes of the Great Lakes Indians (a shirt from deer suede with a fringe and patterns made of beads) became a symbol of the Indians' clothes for the Europeans. The Algonquians themselves used mostly European materials as early as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though they continued to decorate their clothes with the traditional patterns.

► *Fabric shirt*



▲ *Ceremonial bag*

Frames of bark boats were made of fir-tree roots. Birch bark was used for bordering. It took bark from not less than eight trees to make one boat.

Men collected and prepared the material and built boats, while women sowed bark pieces together and greased the seams with pitch. Boats were 2.5-5 m long, and 70-80 cm wide. Due to their flat bottoms, such boats easily got over shallow waters. An Indian stood in the boat on his knees and rowed, hitting the water with an oar on both sides several times in turns. Large boats (5 meters long) were used to transport prey or different goods during migrations. They were also used to collect rice.



▲ *Birch-bark boat*





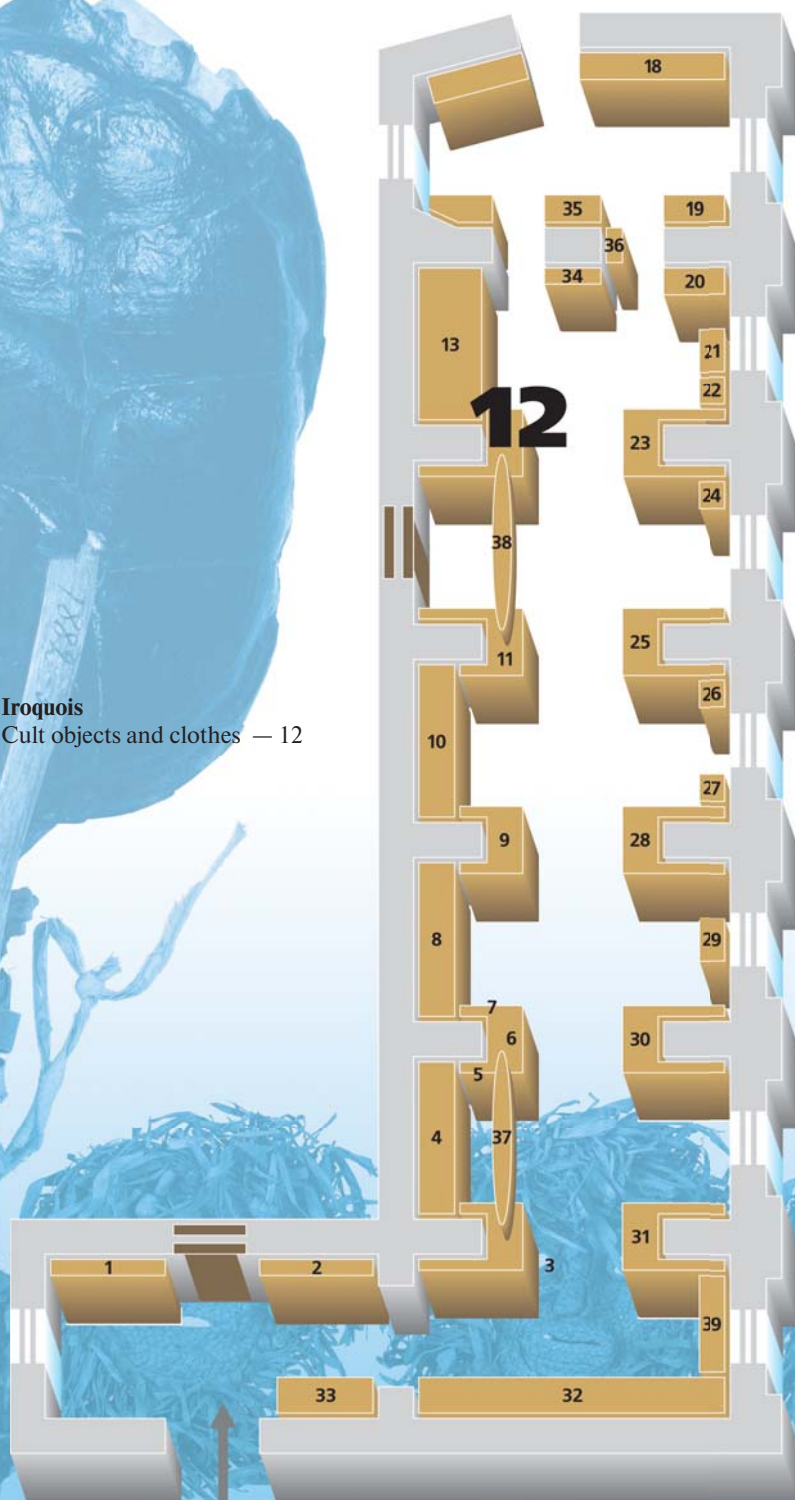
# FARMERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN EAST





## Iroquois

Cult objects and clothes — 12



## THE IROQUOIS PEOPLE

Linguists believe that the Iroquois group of languages is about 4,000 years old. By the time the first contacts were made with the Europeans, languages of the north branch of the Iroquois family were spoken by American Indians inhabiting the territory of the modern state of New York and the adjoining regions of Canada (the Ontario Lake region, the territories west of Lake Erie and the valley of the Saint Lawrence River).

The main occupation of the Iroquois people was farming, and the most popular crops were pumpkin, corn and beans. They also adopted methods of fruit trees (apple, pear and peach trees) growing from the Europeans. Hunting and fishing were also of great importance.

One the exposition one can see the costume which belonged to a chief of the Iroquois tribe called Seneca and which combines European and Indian elements. The shirt and the pants are made of European fabric, while the chief's shoulders are covered with a suede cloak decorated with a symbolic ornament.

The breast decoration (the "sun disc") is made of wampum – filed sea-shells pieces. Conditional symbols on wampum "belts" were a kind of pictographic writing and denoted various important events (making piece, rich harvest, etc.). Beginning from the 18<sup>th</sup> century European glass-beads were used to make "wampum" belts.

Iroquois religious rituals were performed by members of two secret societies – the False Faces and the Corn Faces.

The establishment of the False Faces societies is connected to the following legend. A long time ago the Good spirit met the Evil spirit. To see who is stronger, they decided to move a mountain. The Evil spirit failed to do it, and the Good spirit moved one mountain so close to another, that he squeezed the Evil spirit who stood between them. Trying to get out from between the mountains, the Evil spirit hurt himself, and as a result acquired a new, "false" face. The Good spirit not only altered the face of his adversary, but he also changed his character, as the Evil spirit now began to help people and heal illnesses. Since then, all members of the False Faces society carve wooden masks which depict their patron and use them during healing rituals.

Members of the other secret society – Corn Faces - made masks depicting the spirit of corn.



▲ *Suede cloak*



Ceremonies of these secret societies were accompanied by singing and dancing and the sound of drums, and rattles made of tortoise shells.



▲ Masks of the “False Faces” society



▲ Masks of the “Corn Faces” society



▲ Rattle made of tortoise shell



# FARMERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN SOUTHWEST

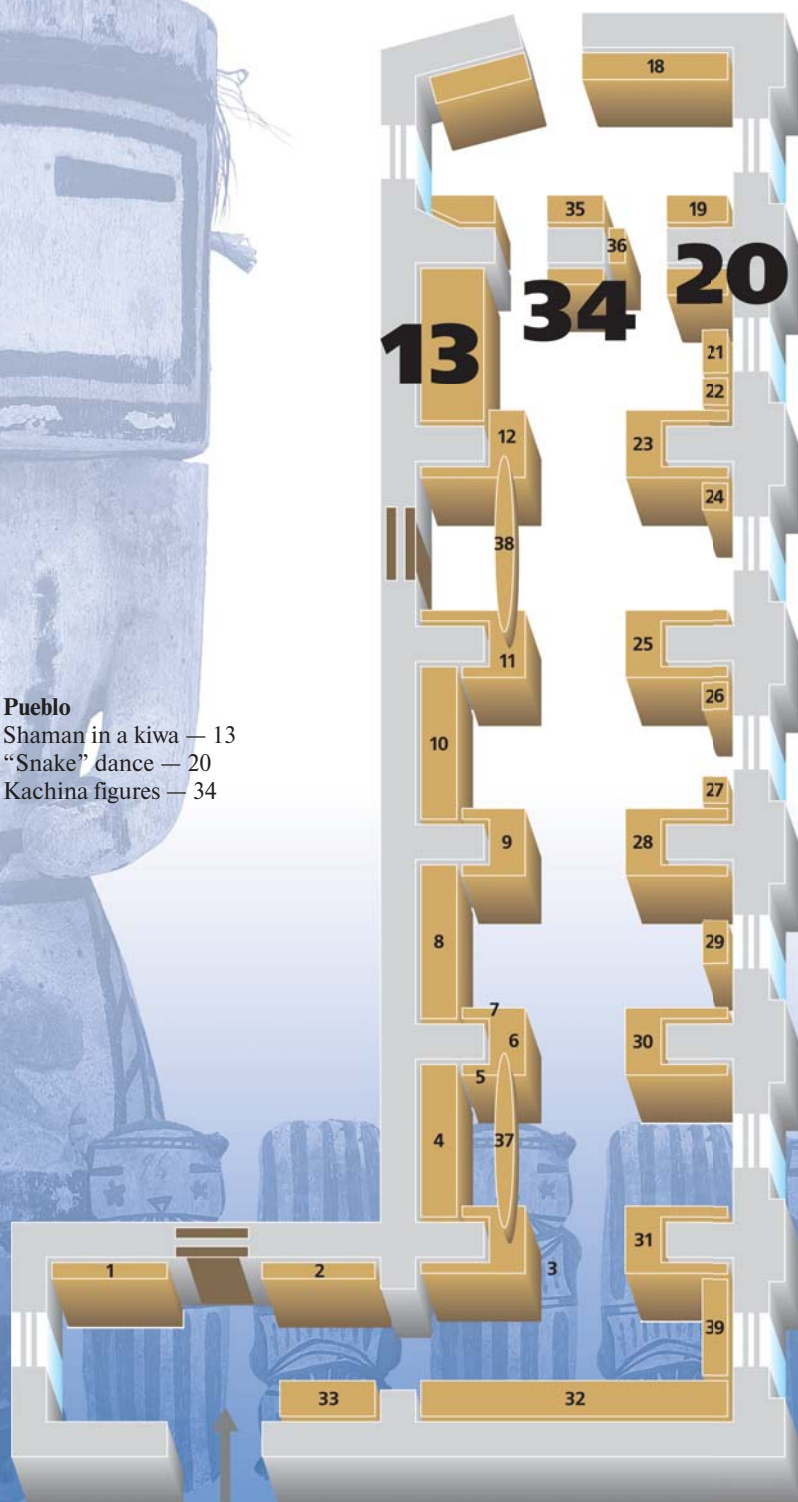


# **Pueblo**

Shaman in a kiwa — 13

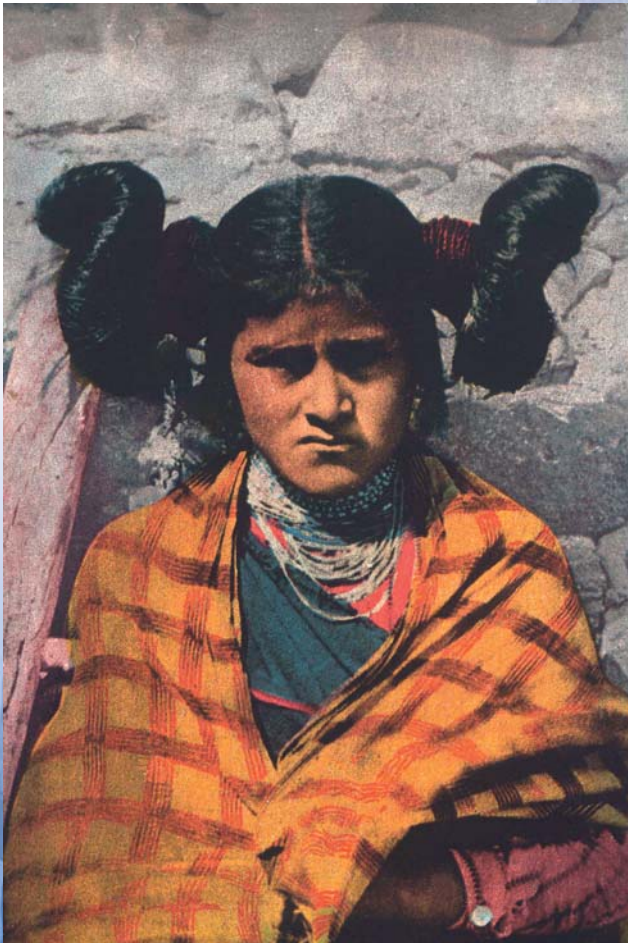
“Snake” dance — 20

Kachina figures — 34



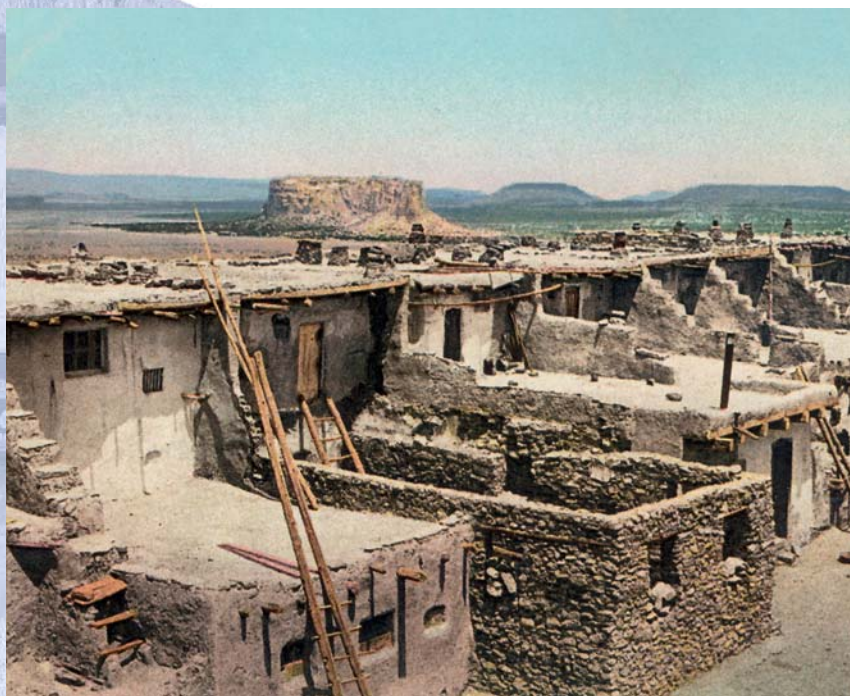
## PUEBLO PEOPLE

The American Southwest (modern states of Arizona and New Mexico) were inhabited by the Pueblo Indians. Pueblo got their name from the Spanish word 'pueblo' — 'village', 'settlement'. The Pueblo people lived in rectangular houses made of clay and stones that were usually united into a large multi-room dwelling. People got inside from the flat roof using ladders.



▲ Pueblo woman. Photograph, beginning of the 20th century





▲ *Pueblo settlement. Photograph, beginning of the 20th century.*



▲ *Woven belt*

The Pueblo people grew corn, beans, pumpkin, sunflowers and fruit trees. They also bred turkeys, hunted small animals and deer. In the 16<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup> centuries they began to breed horses, sheep and cattle. They wove fabrics and made ceramic objects. Their painted ceramics is famous. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century craftsmen began to copy paintings from vessels found by archaeologists during excavations. At that time pottery reached its new Golden Age and many objects enriched museums and private collections.

First ceramics appeared in the Southwest more than two thousand years ago. Pottery was a women's occupation. They did not use potter's wheel. Pottery was made of stripes of clay that were applied in a spiral. Painted pottery appeared in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. In the 11 century inhabitants of the Mimbres River valley in the south of the modern state of New Mexico began to depict people and animals on their vessels. Mimbres painting



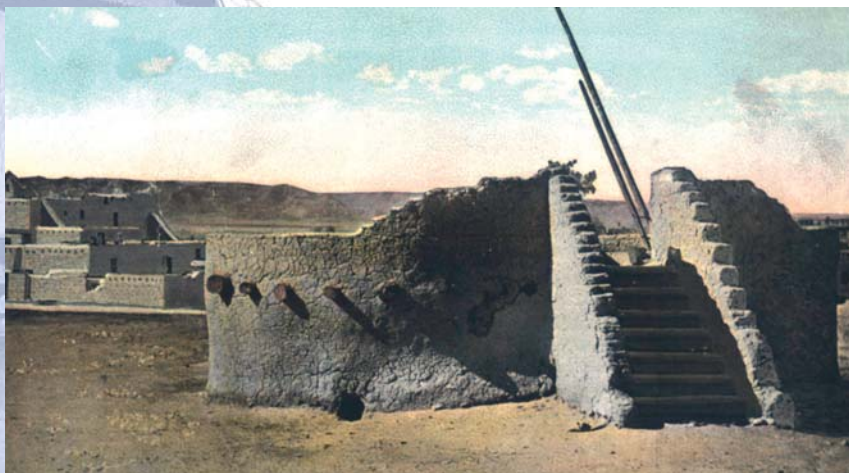
▲  
◀ Ceramic vessels  
▼

is a unique phenomenon of the art of Ancient America. It influenced the development of pottery in the Southwest, but the Pueblo people mostly used geometrical patterns





Each Pueblo village had Kiwa sanctuaries. Rituals performed in such sanctuaries were aimed at providing rich harvest that depended on the rainfall. A priest used



▲ *Ancient Kiwa sanctuary*

painted sand to create images on the floor of the sanctuary that were related to the concept of thunderstorm, and asked Kachina spirits to send the rain.

It is considered that in the cult of the primeval ancestors (Kachina) in the form known to us was formed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Kachina figures were made of wood and clay.

Kachina heads were made in the form of rectangular masks with outlines of eye-brows, eyes and the mouth. Often the head was crowned with a headdress compiled of stepped elements. These steps symbolized clouds that brought the rain. Bunches of small birds' feathers were used to decorate such figures.



▲ *Wooden Kachina figure*



▲ *Ceramic Kachina figure*

Each Kiwa sanctuary had an altar that is represented on the exposition.

Its upper part contains the figure of the Thunder Bird. Below there is a depiction of four winds corresponding to the four parts of the world. Below them there is a yellow face of the Mother-Moon, on the sides – four snakes-lightings. On the front supports to pumas are painted. The red puma symbolizes the south, the yellow puma – the north. During prayers corn ears were installed on the altar with feathers attached to them. These were sacrifices to the gods.



▲ Altar



One of the most famous Pueblo rituals of calling the rain was the “snake” dance.

When performing such dance, the priest held a rattlesnake that symbolized the lightning in his teeth. Before the dance the snake was given a stick to bite it and let out its poison, so for about an hour and a half it became harmless. No one except the priest was aware of this. If someone doubted the priest’s power, this person was offered to touch a rattlesnake (this time not a neutralized one) himself. After the “snake” dance rain (so necessary to irrigate the fields) was supposed to begin accompanied with thunder and lightning. Since the priests knew the signs that usually preceded the thunderstorm, the rain often started soon, indeed.

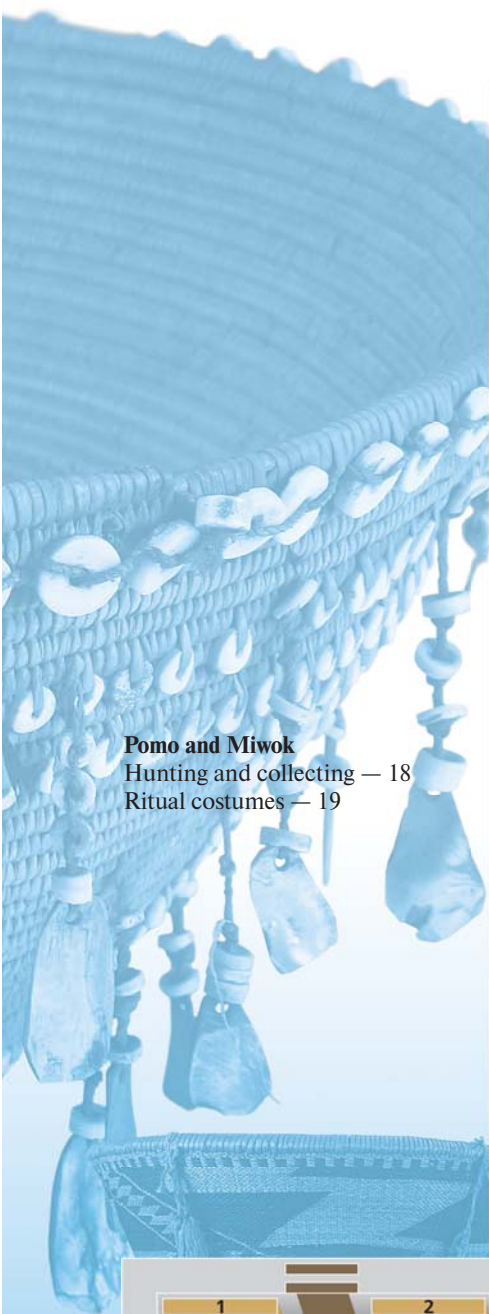


▲ Shaman performing “snake” dance



# GATHERERS AND HUNTERS OF CALIFORNIA





**Pomo and Miwok**  
Hunting and collecting — 18  
Ritual costumes — 19



## THE POMO AND MIWOK PEOPLE

Before the appearance of the Europeans on the territory of the modern state of California, it was inhabited with people who spoke dozens of languages that belonged to different language families. Most of these families are united by linguists into two large groups – Penuti and Hocan. Coastal Miwok refer to the first group, Pomo – to the second.

Women collected acorns, nuts, fruits and roots. Acorns were soaked in hot water to remove bitterness. After that they were dried and pounded on a stone mill. The flour was used to make flat cookies or soups.

Men were occupied with hunting. When hunting deer, the hunters disguised themselves. They put on deer skins and, imitating the animals' goings-on, waited for them at a watering place. The deer have good sense of smell but poor eyesight, and it allowed a hunter approach the herd from the lee side and shoot arrows from a short distance.



▲ *Deer hunter*



Californian Indians were very skilful in making baskets and other wicker objects. This has always been a women's occupation. Young branches and thin roots of cedar, pine, maple and nut-tree were used. Baskets were covered with geometrical patterns and decorated with shells and pearl plates.

Large baskets were used to keep and transport goods and for making food. They were woven so tight that they were waterproof. Baskets were filled with water that was boiled in them with the help of red-hot stones and then meat or fish was cooked in it. Californian Indians did not know pottery.



◀ Basket ▼



◀ Waterproof basket



▲ *Ceremonial costume  
made of condor feathers*

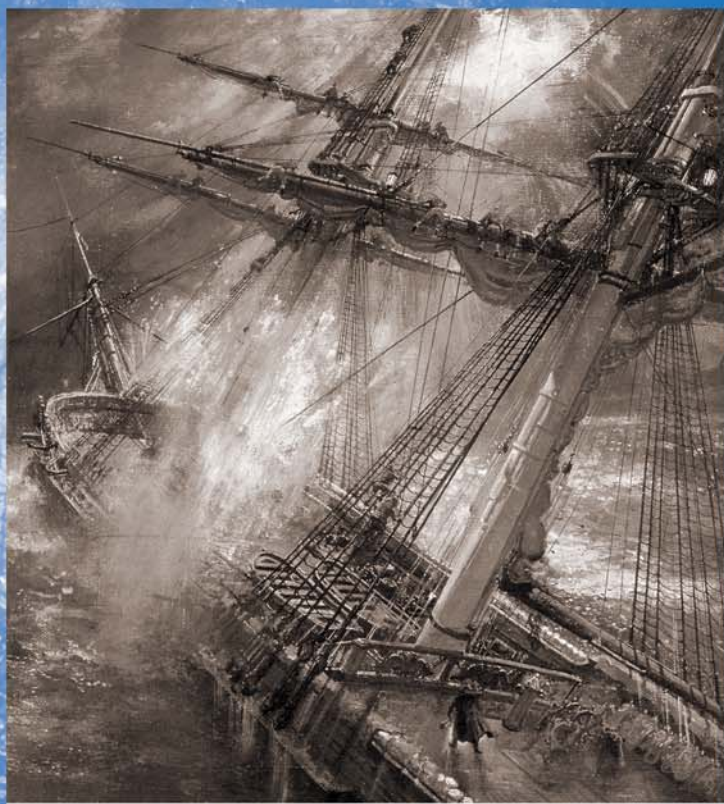
Californian Indians' ritual clothes refer to the Museum's unique exhibits. These are costumes made of condor and raven feathers.



Such costumes were worn by the chiefs and shamans during the most important religious ceremonies dedicated to the local cults.



▲ *Ceremonial costume  
made of raven feathers*



# THE HISTORY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM



The collection representing the culture of the people of North America began to form in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century after the discovery of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands by the participants of the expedition headed by V.I. Bering and A.I. Chirikov. Participants of the expeditions headed by Yu.F. Lisyansky, V.M. Golovnin and others also contributed to the enrichment of the Museum's collections. An outstanding role was played by I.G. Voznesenskii, who in was acquiring collections in the Russian America at a special assignment of the Emperor's Academy of Sciences. He acquired around a thousand objects on the culture of Alaskan and Californian Indians, which at that time formed almost half of the Museum's collection on the peoples of North America. One of the latest collections on the people of Alaska was received from the missionary G. Chudnovskii.

## YU.F. LISYANSKY



▲ *Yu.F. Lisyansky*

In 1803-1806 the first Russian round-the-world expedition headed by I.F. Krusenstern and Yu.F. Lisyansky was held on ships "Nadezhda" (in Russian 'hope') and "Neva". The "Neva" came to anchor in the Pavlov Bay of the Kodiak Island. After a month's anchorage, the ship headed to Sitka Island where it participated in the military campaign against the Tlingit. The crew spent the winter of 1804-1805 on the Kodiak Island, and in June 1805 the "Neva" left the Russian America.

During his almost a year-long stay on Alaska, Yu.F. Lisyansky familiarized himself with the culture of the local population and made a description of it. Yu.F. Lisyansky, P.V. Povalishin and G.G. Langsdorf collected rich ethnographical material.

## V.M. GOLOVNIN



▲ *V.M. Golovnin*

A famous Russian sea-farer V.M. Golovnin visited Alaska twice – during his navigation on the sloop "Diana" in 1809-1811 and in 1818 during his circumnavigation in the ship "Kamchatka". During the second travel he acquired ethnographical collections. Like many other sailors, V.M. Golovnin, after his return to St.Petersburg, divided his collection into several parts. He gave one part to the Kunstkamera, another – to the Museum of the State Admiralty. It is possible, that V.M. Golovnin also gave part of his collection to the Academy of Arts together with the drawings made by artist M.T. Tikhanov, a member of the expedition. At present, all the three parts of V.M. Golovnin's ethnographical collection belong to the MAE.

## I.G. VOZNESENSKY

In 1836 the Kunstkamera was divided into seven separate museums, including the Ethnographical Museum. Then it became obvious that the American collections of the newly created museums are small in number. To enrich the collections, the Emperor's Academy of Sciences decided to send one of its members of staff to Russian America. The choice fell on I.G. Voznesensky – assistant curator of the Zoological Museum.

I.G. Voznesensky arrived to Novoarkhangelsk (the administrative center of the Russian America) in May 1840. He made it his residence for five years, during which he returned here after his travels. During his stay in the Russian America, I.G. Voznesensky made contacts with many employees of the Russian-American Company, many of whom became his voluntary assistants. I.G. Voznesensky visited almost all regions: North California, the islands of the Alexander Archipelago, the Kenai Peninsula, the Kodiak Island, the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, Norton Bay coast and the region of the Bering Strait. Everywhere he acquired collections. On the whole, 950 objects on 18 groups of the indigenous population of the Russian America were received from I.G. Voznesensky by the Museum. Using his experience of a zoologist, he acquired ethnographical collections in series, and not as single objects (for example, he acquired an Aleutian canoe together with all hunting gear).



▲ I.G. Voznesensky

## L.A. ZAGOSKIN

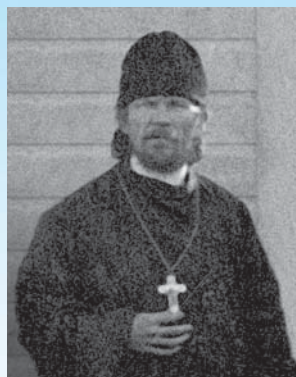
A valuable ethnographical collection was received by the Museum from a famous explorer of Alaska L.A. Zagoskin. He arrived to Novoarchangelsk on October, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1839 and during the first two years of his service in the colonies, commanded the ships of the Russian-American Company. In 1842-1844 L.A. Zagoskin headed the expedition whose mission was to explore the inland regions of Alaska. He and his team of several people spent about four months in the Mikhailov redoubt on the Norton Bay coast. This area was populated by the Unaligmiut Eskimos. L.A. Zagoskin traveled along the Norton Bay coast to the mouth of the Unalakleet River and along it came to the Yukon River (Kwiguk). Going up the Yukon River he arrived to the Nulato factory that was located on the territory that belonged to the Koyukon Athabaskans.



▲ L.A. Zagoskin



L.A. Zagoskin explored the Yukon tributaries and the culture of the local population – the Ikogmiut Eskimos. Then L.A. Zagoskin explored the middle flow of the Kuskokwim River where he got familiar with another group of Eskimos – the Kuskokwim Eskimos. The Ikogmiut and the Kuskokwim Eskimos are often referred to as the “river Eskimos”. L.A. Zagoskin also collected materials on the Koyukon Athabaskans.

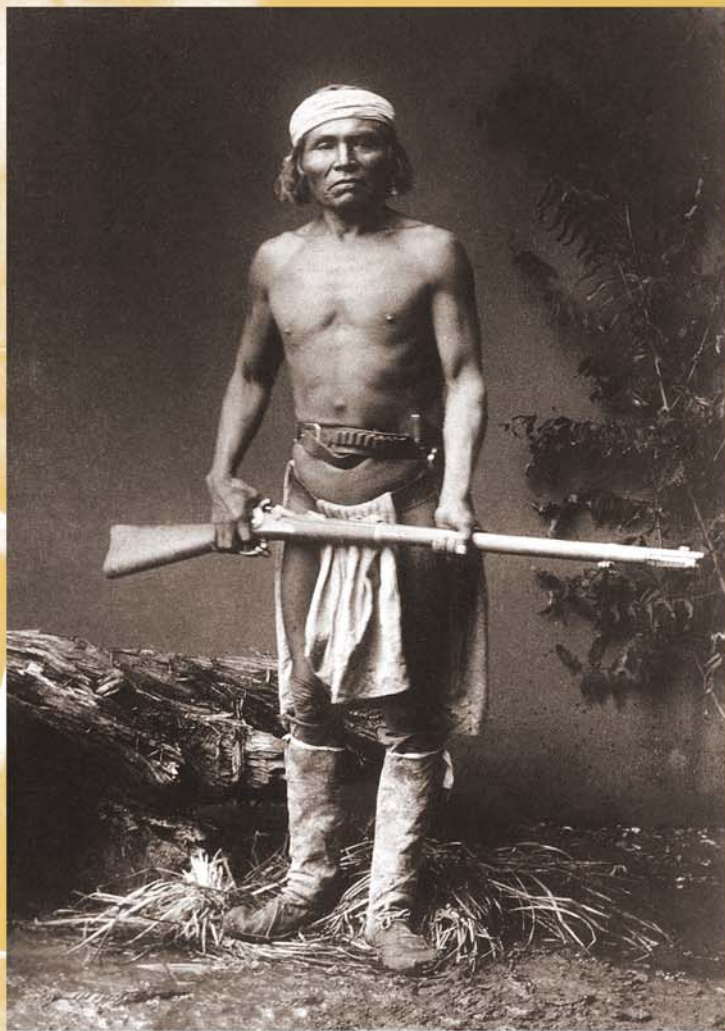


▲ *G. Chudnovsky*

## G. CHUDNOVSKY

In May 1891 the Museum received a collection on the Tlingit culture from an Alaskan orthodox missionary Georgy Chudnovsky. G. Chudnovsky began his missionary activity in a Tlingit village called Killisnu on the Admiralty Island where he stayed from October 1889 until January 1890. G. Chudnovsky then again spent several months among the Killisnu Indians in the summer and autumn of 1890.

G. Chudnovsky's collection is one of the latest Alaskan collections received by the Museum. It is of special value as the Tlingit people themselves participated in its formation and gave G. Chudnovsky their antique objects.



# THE ROOM OF THE PEOPLES OF AMERICA IN FIVE MINUTES





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- Aleutian wooden cap-peak hat — 4
- Woman's mask with a labret. Tlingit — 9
- Tlingit ceremonial wicker-hat — 25
- Seneca chief costume — 12
- Waterproof basket. Californian Indians — 35



▲ *Alutiiq mask*

The Alutiiq people divided the world into the underground, underwater, earthly and celestial spheres and inhabited them with various spirits. The rituals related to these cults began in October, after the end of the hunting season, and lasted as long as there was enough food. Shaman rituals, aimed at providing successful hunt in the next season, and funeral repasts were mass events. Members of secret men's societies organized ritual performances dedicated to the ancestors' cult. Commemorations of the dead lasted for several years. When they were over, one of the newborn babies got the name of the deceased man. The people believed that the soul of the deceased man was the patron-spirit of the baby and guided him until he became a full member of the society.

Legendary and mythical ancestors, including outstanding hunters and warriors, were worshiped by members of men's unions. During the ceremony they put on masks depicting ancestors and performed ritual dances.





▲ *Wooden cap-peak hat*

Aleut sea hunters wore hats or obtrusive wooden cap peaks. This satisfied several needs: to provide good luck, to protect from evil spirits, to protect the eyes from salty splashes and blinding sun rays. To make a wooden hat a plate was cut that was then steamed out and bended until it took the required shape. The joints were laced with tendons. Hats were painted and decorated with ivory plates and figures, beads and sea-lion whiskers. This animal only has four long whiskers: the luckier was the hunter, the more whiskers he wore on his hat. All the above mentioned details indicated the clan that the hunter belonged to and his social status. Conical hats symbolized birds' or sea-animals' heads.



▲ *Ceremonial Tlingit woven hat*

The front part of the hat's brims is covered with an image of the killer-whale with oblong nostrils and large eyes made in the style of a symmetrically-unfolded image. Such shape of eyes is typical of all killer-whale and other sea animals' drawings. The two "eyes" on the crown of the hat symbolize the animal's breathing outlet; the two "faces" on the sides of the crown symbolize the back fin, and the three-fingered hands — the side fins. The tail is drawn in the form of an anthropomorphic head that symbolized the killer-whale's soul. When depicting this animal, the "eye" figures were usually outlined with light paint.

On the exposition there is a collection of Tlingit women decorations (labrets) and several masks depicting women with labrets in their lower lips.

When a Tlingit girl reached puberty, the shaman pierced her lower lip and inserted a small decoration (a labret) into it. As the girl grew, the labret was changed several times for bigger ones. A noble rich Tlingit woman wore a large labret that reached 5-6 cm in diameter. The labret was a symbol of noble origin and wealth, and also served as an amulet that protected the woman from the evil spirits. Slaves were not allowed to wear labrets.

Large labrets caused a lot of inconveniences. Elderly women often had their lower lip torn apart – then it was tied in a knot and a smaller labret was inserted.



▲ *Woman's mask with a labret*



► *Waterproof basket*

Californian Indians did not know pottery, so to cook food they used large waterproof baskets. They were made of tree branches and roots. For cooking a basket was filled with water and then meat and red-hot stones were put into it. The basket swelled and did not let water through. Stones that grew cool were replaced with hot stones and thus boiled the meat.



▲ *Seneca chief costume*

Among the most valuable exhibits of the hall of North America is the full costume of the chief of the Iroquois tribe Seneca. The headdress is made of dyed horse hair. It symbolizes the blood-stained scalp of an enemy. The scalp is part of skin cut off one's head together with hair. Although it was a shame for an Indian warrior to fight against a woman, scalps of white blond women were of the highest value.

In this costume elements of European and Indian clothes are combined. The shirt and the leggings are made of fabric, while the cloak is an Indian element. It is made of suede and decorated with a pattern constituted by shell pieces.



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Yu. E. Berezkin, C. A. Korsun

## NORTH AMERICA

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