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ATHAPASKAN CLOTHING AND RELATED OBJECTS IN THE COLLECTIONS OF FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
 By JAMES W. VANSTONE. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1981. Fieldiana, Anthropology, New Series No. 4. 86 p., illus. US \$7.00. Softbound.

James VanStone has been comfortable with a number of anthropological subdisciplines throughout his scholarly career, including archaeology, ethnology and ethnohistory. He is also a student of material culture, and this publication is yet another of VanStone's contributions to our understanding of northern Athapaskans in general and of their material culture in particular. His well-rounded intellectual perspective is apparent in what at first glance appears to be a rather typical museum catalogue.

The purpose of his book is to document and illustrate 31 items of northern Athapaskan clothing and related objects obtained in the Yukon Valley of Alaska near the end of the nineteenth century. These objects are contained in the collections of the Department of Anthropology at Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. This book exceeds the normal requirements of a museum catalogue in a number of respects, and in so doing touches upon a variety of northern anthropological interests.

VanStone begins with a discussion of the scarcity of traditional northern Athapaskan clothing in museum collections. Although a number of museums do have some items of northern Athapaskan clothing, these pieces remain for the most part undocumented and unpublished. There are exceptions to this unfortunate state of affairs, including the Kutchin material in the National Museum of Man in Ottawa. Perhaps the most notable exception is the very valuable collection of Alaska Athapaskan clothing at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad. Appropriately, VanStone recently collaborated on the publication of this collection (Siebert, 1980).

The chapter describing the Field Museum's collection is prefaced with observations on the ethnographic context of Athapaskan clothing, many of which are relevant for groups in both Alaska and Canada. Drawing on the extensive ethnographic research of Catharine McClellan, VanStone remarks on Athapaskan modesty and the intimate connection between individuals and their clothing in some Athapaskan societies. These comments make the subsequent descriptions of the specimens doubly rewarding. This section concludes with a description of aboriginal Athapaskan hide preparation and sewing, a description that all northern Athapaskan archaeologists would do well to read for its detail and clarity. VanStone includes observations on the bone and stone tools that would have been used prehistorically. It is interesting to note that this tool kit survives to this

day basically unaltered among some Athapaskans in the Northwest Territories, except that metal has replaced the slate scraper blade.

The remainder of this chapter, which constitutes the bulk of the book's text, is devoted to detailed descriptions of the clothing and related objects. Accompanying these descriptions are excellent black and white photographic plates of all the objects, as well as 18 high-quality line drawings of sewing patterns, illustrating how various specimens were put together. Also included are several plates taken from early historical sources depicting Athapaskans in their native garb. These latter illustrations are a thoughtful addition, as they enhance the reader's sense of the historical ethnographic context.

The objects described include five tunics, six pairs of moccasin-trousers, one child's costume, four hoods, one cap, one decorated strap, two wristlets, one pair of mittens, one pair of gloves, three pairs of moccasins, two quivers, and four pouches. All the descriptions are detailed, clear, easy to follow, and conclude with a discussion. VanStone compares these pieces with similar ones from other Alaskan groups observed by early explorers, described by ethnographers, or illustrated in published museum collections. This is a good example of his thoroughness.

There is much to hold the reader's attention in these descriptive passages. For example, there is a discussion on the sex attributes of tunics based in part on observations VanStone derived from "experimental ethnography." This involved one of his female colleagues trying on a tunic, allowing various inferences concerning size to be made. I was also struck by the practical design of the child's costume. The mittens are sewn to the sleeves of the hooded shirt, with slits provided for the hands. Anyone who takes care of children in a continental climate can appreciate the wisdom of this design, as the problems of lost mittens and freezing hands are eliminated. Such a glimpse of cultural adaptation is even more interesting because of its continued relevance.

Hoods are another item of clothing which offer further insight into northern Athapaskan culture. VanStone writes that, with the exception of children's clothing, the attached hood was adopted after the coming of Europeans. It is thought that the attached hood, or parka hood, would have restricted seeing and hearing, an obvious disadvantage to forest hunters. One of the most interesting items in the collection is a detached hood, so heavily decorated with beading that it weighs 820 g (1 lb, 13 oz). It was undoubtedly a formidable object to wear.

Following the artifact descriptions and discussion, the book concludes with sections on ornamentation, clothing change, and attributions. These sections are rich in anthropological information and together form an appropriate conclusion. In discussing the decoration of clothing as the major artistic expression of northern Athapaskans, VanStone traces the changes in materials and motifs as a result of European contact in Alaska. He notes that following the general availability of beads among the Kutchin, only those persons who were regarded as poor used porcupine quills. Significantly, porcupine-quill work is presently undergoing a revival among some northern Athapaskan groups in Canada.

The discussion of clothing change leaves the reader with certain questions. Although VanStone refers to rapid acceptance of European clothing among aboriginal Athapaskans, further observations by him indicate that the situation was much more complex. He writes that aboriginal clothing styles had virtually disappeared throughout much of the Yukon River Valley by the end of the nineteenth century, yet also notes that the relatively isolated Tanana were still wearing moccasin-trousers in the early 1930s. His use of a variety of ethnohistorical sources underscores the true complexity of contact situations, belying the existence of tidy, unidirectional change.

The book concludes with a thorough assessment of the collection's provenience problems. Although the documentation is far from ideal, an approximate date and origin for the collection can be determined. No further precision beyond this is possible, however, as nineteenth-century collectors rarely bothered about specific documentation, and this collection is no exception. VanStone recognizes that exact cultural affiliations cannot be assigned and freely admits to the possible bias in attributing specimens to the Kutchin. Much more information is available on Kutchin clothing, both in the literature and in museum collections, making comparison much easier.

This book is noteworthy for VanStone's command of the ethnohistorical and ethnographic literature and the resulting fullness of the documentation. Such documentation allows the author to place the specimens in their broader anthropological context, thereby transcending the limitations of the inventory approach. His decades of research among northern Athapaskans are apparent in his almost casual thoroughness.

The omission of a map depicting the region and the groups in question is an unfortunate oversight, especially for those of us with little or no knowledge of Alaskan ethnography. I would also suggest that when unpublished work is cited in the text, that the reader be told where the manuscript can be obtained. If it is not available, I recommend that the work not be cited.

In conclusion, this book is a piece of solid scholarship in the material-culture study tradition. As William Fenton observed several years ago, such studies have never been that popular in anthropology, nor have they ever died out (1974:17). Students of northern anthropology are fortunate that VanStone continues his work in this vein, especially considering the scarcity of early northern Athapaskan material culture and the generally poor documentation.

I recommend this book to all with an interest in the anthropology and ethnohistory of northern Athapaskans. I also recommend it to all museum curators as both a model and standard for museum catalogues. Finally, it should be studied by all archaeologists engaged in the reconstruction of northern Athapaskan prehistory, as VanStone provides a glimpse of the ethnographic richness which is no longer perceptible in the archaeological record. For those who think only of the stark simplicity of northern Athapaskan life in the Subarctic, this book is a pleasant surprise and an important lesson.

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ALEUT AND ESKIMO ART: TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN SOUTH ALASKA. By DOROTHY JEAN RAY. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981. ISBN 0-295-95709-3. 250 p. incl. app., gloss., bib., index, illus. No price indicated.

This book treats the geographic area from St. Michael, on the north-eastern shore of the Bering Sea, southward, wherein reside people of Eskimo-Aleut speech. The subject is the recognized arts from the time of the first exploration of the region by Europeans until the present day, including contemporary and almost completely non-traditional fine-arts movements. In this it provides a companion to the author's earlier *Eskimo Art: Tradition and Innovation in North Alaska* (University of Washington Press, 1977).

In addition to more than 200 black and white illustrations, the book contains a lengthy (79-page) section of text that deals sequentially with the history of contact, artistic techniques, traditional arts (as defined by early historical sources and collections), and new arts. Naturally, a major focus is upon changes in artistic tradition that occurred as responses both to alterations in native lifeways, and to the arrival of the commercial art market with the first souvenir-hungry foreigners. The research is careful, the photographs generally very good, the selection discriminating, the result significant.

There were, obviously, problems for the author. Whereas north of St. Michael the recording of history and the systematic collecting of souvenirs both were begun by responsible visitors only shortly before the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the south the first significant contacts were made by commercial opportunists, the Cossack fur hunters, in a traumatic association that began shortly after the first Aleuts were sighted in 1741 and lasted, essentially unregulated, until the assignment of the first permanent Russian priest to Alaska in 1824. During this period the crafts — including those now recognized as arts — underwent a change so profound as to alter seriously the shape of what can now be found, through historical study alone, to call "traditional". A laudable

but nevertheless incomplete effort to overcome this shortcoming is made by the use of photographs of material from some early Russian collections.

To her further credit, the author hopes that "one day someone can make an intensive study of historical Aleut and Pacific Eskimo art in all media, utilizing world-wide collections at first hand. By also including the art of prehistoric times . . . such a study would give the art of the Aleut and Pacific Eskimos the attention it deserves" (p. 6). Such an endeavor would add to the present corpus at least two media that are lacking coverage entirely — stoneware, particularly stone vessels of the Aleut and Pacific Eskimo regions, and pottery, so characteristic of the coast of the Bering Sea. The first of these, with a beginning at least 6000 years ago on the Pacific coast, reached an artistic height some time in the first millennium A.D., although the craft may have declined by the time of the Russian arrival. The second, first in evidence more than 2000 years ago and always solely utilitarian, was still thriving upon European contact, with some of the best potted wares produced after the foreign presence was well established.

With no intent to criticize the present author in particular, one must lament the limits that our own conceptions of art and artistry impose upon any such study as this — limits that banish entirely from our attention crucial elements of the genius of the people who are this art's producers and of which the art is only a fragmentary manifestation. Without falling back upon the hackneyed characterization of these same people as mechanical wizards, it is nonetheless fair to point to a long tradition of engineering and executionary skills. Males in this tradition produced not only intricate hunting gadgets in profuse variety, but also cribbed frames for semi-subterranean buildings fastened together only through notched connections that held ever more solidly with each increase in weight of overlying sod; these skills also produced that marvel of sea- and craftmanship, the flexible-framed kayak. It is this same focus upon engineered form that is exhibited in today's native communities, where each man builds his own plank skiff of his own design, without recorded plan, contriving the angle and depth of transom to take what he conceives to be the greatest advantage of the biggest outboard motor he can buy. Within the sphere of the females it was this focus that produced the watertight cover of the kayak, the elegant waterproof of gut for its paddler, the parkas and raincoats made variously of fur, of the peltry of birds, or of the skin of fish. All of these products have carried design and elaboration to a point well beyond that required by mere utility, and so enter the realm of artistry.

It is no wonder that, as demands of life have changed, there are among these people individuals who have turned to the market-carving of ivory and wood, or the weaving of rye grass, and who excel at it. But unfortunately our sole attention to these more narrow categories — those we see as art — leaves us blind to those broader, related ones. Even anthropologists have not embraced the study of craft production in these broad terms — despite the fact that more than one of us who have worked ethnographically in southwestern Alaska are uncommonly interested in the material aspects of culture. It is no credit to our vision.

But it is always easier to find fault with the book that was not written, and Ray's aim included nothing of the sort that I have just described, although one must add that she does not slight the seamstress. To return to Ray's work, it is possible to point to several questions — more of social than artistic import, to be sure — that might profitably be addressed, some on the basis of data she presents, others that she might have answered with only a little in the way of explanation, still others that call for information she did not or could not call forth.

As one example, the spheres of activity that have persisted most fully into the modern world are those of men — the carving of ivory and of wood. With one partial exception, traditional artistic activities of women have not endured similarly. In the Aleutian Islands twined baskets have continued to be made since the beginning of contact, but to the north the skill all but died out, the basketry revived as a souvenir art in which twining was replaced by the introduced technique of coiling. Although the sewing of skins persisted longer than pottery making, it too has vanished virtually everywhere except in the manufacture of some souvenir dolls, and these often of indifferent quality. All of this is at variance with what has happened in many parts of the world, where males are first and most acculturated to suffer the speedier loss of traditional activities. What is the difference here?

Another example is the rather rapid abandonment of the making of baked clay vessels upon the arrival of Euro-American trade pots of other materials, which, coupled with the unsuccessful attempt to introduce