

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL
PAPERS OF THE AMERICAN
MUSEUM OF NATURAL
HISTORY. VOL. XVII, PART I**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649248612

Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History. Vol. XVII, Part I by
Clark Wissler

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CLARK WISSLER

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAPERS
OF
THE AMERICAN MUSEUM
OF NATURAL HISTORY

VOL. XVII, PART I

RIDING GEAR OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

BY
CLARK WISSLER

NEW YORK
PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE TRUSTEES
1915

EDITOR'S NOTE.

This paper is the first of a volume treating certain phases of material culture in North America. When completed a permanent title page with table of contents and index will be supplied. Then the temporary title pages can be discarded.

RIDING GEAR OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.

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Fig. 1. Camp scene showing a saddle staked down while the Rawhide Cover girls and sea. Painting by Catlin in the Mills Collection.

INTRODUCTION.

The investigation of the horse culture complex among the American Indians was undertaken to discover the procedure in a concrete case of culture diffusion, an important anthropological problem of the day. One of the most difficult tasks confronting the anthropologist is the elucidation of the precise complexes by which various traits of culture are produced. Since there is on every hand abundant evidence that many traits of culture are borrowed, or diffused, over large areas, the study of typical concrete instances of diffusion are of the first importance. A number of European anthropologists have been so impressed with the significance of diffusion, that they have developed from it a theory to account for the origin of culture traits. This theory is usually known as that of single origin as opposed to the theory of independent invention. The former asserts that all important traits of culture were invented but once and subsequently gradually diffused; the latter, that the same invention was made independently in many parts of the world, whence its diffusion is but apparent. As everyone knows, the discussion of such problems comes to naught unless concrete cases can be investigated.

The horse culture complex of the American Indian offers an excellent opportunity to study diffusion, because most of the essential facts are obtainable. The horse was introduced by Europeans at an early date and spread ahead of interior exploration. In particular, many of the tribes west of the Mississippi River became horsemen before their discovery by Europeans. The history of horse introduction is briefly outlined in the *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 1-25. The investigation here reported is the intensive study of collections of riding gear and horse-using appliances to be found in anthropological collections. The material available in the Museum gives us a representative series for each important tribe in the horse-using area so that we may proceed in confidence.

A preliminary statement of the results attained in this study were published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 1, p. 254. In the selection and comparison of specimens the writer has been aided by Mr. William A. Sabine, assistant in the Museum, whose great knowledge of specimens and their distribution was indispensable to the task. Other acknowledgments are due to Mr. S. Ichikawa for the illustrations and to my secretary, Miss Bella Weitzner, for gathering reference material.

July, 1915.