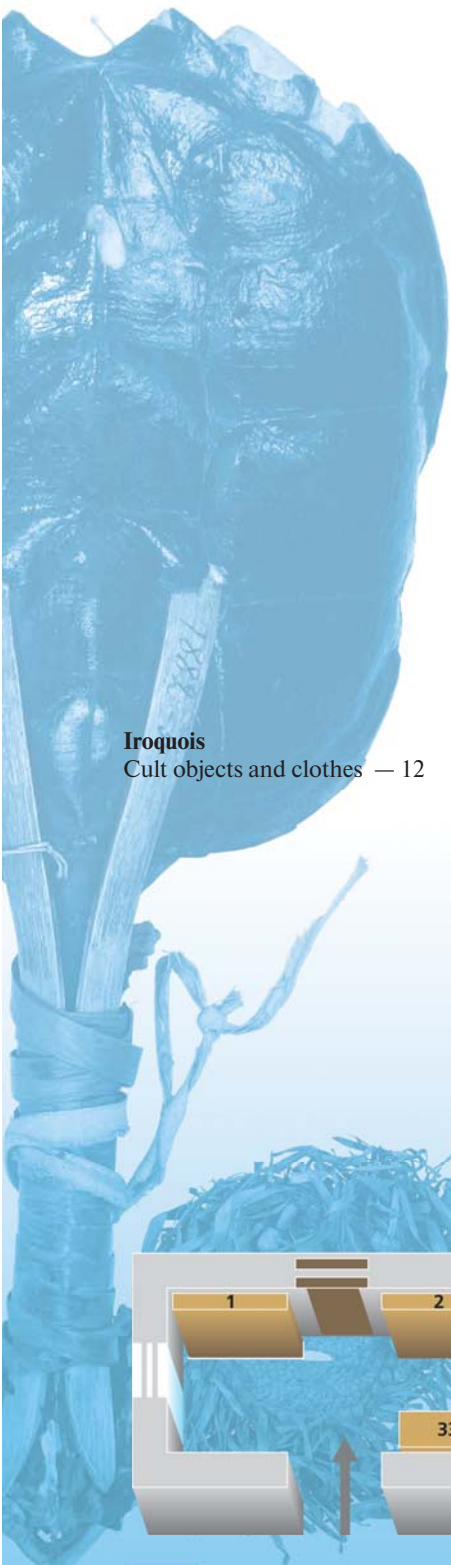
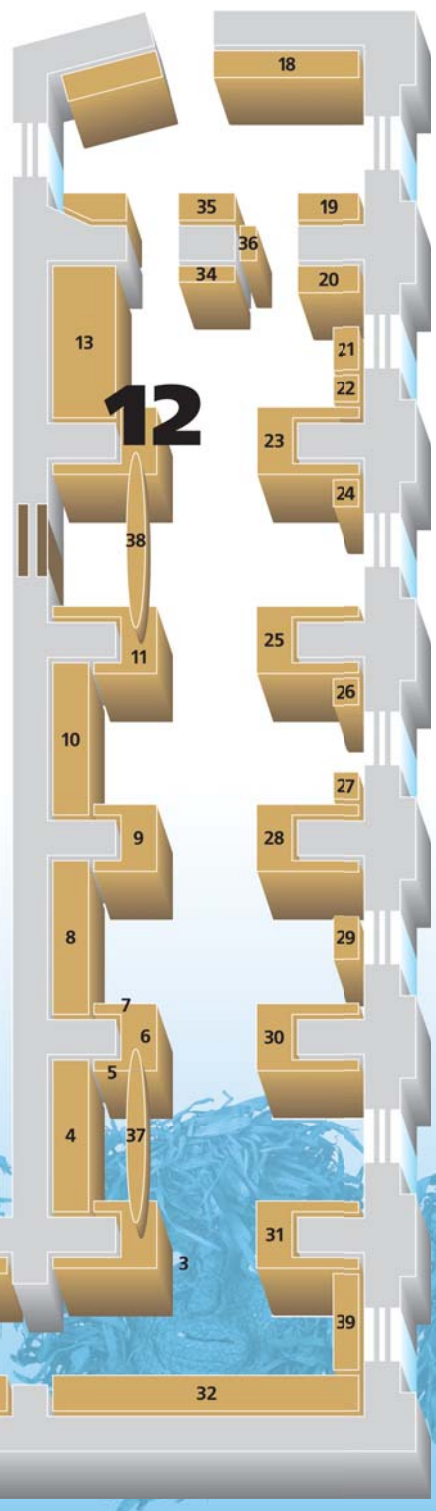


FARMERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN EAST





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 18th 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*